

FOR SUCH
* IS LIFE

SILAS K. HOCKING

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

ON

MR. SILAS K. HOCKING'S RECENT WORK, "THE HEART OF MAN."

The FREE METHODIST says:

"Should Mr. Hocking write no more, his niche in English literature is now filled. Taken in every way the book is great. Arrestive, sustained, idyllic, powerfully dramatic, it lays hold of the reader from the first and holds him as with a spell. 'The Heart of Man' is true to its title. It is a close study of the envies, hates, subterfuges, designs, crafts, and malignancies of that something in us which is said to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The exposure is frank without exaggeration, and the psychologic portions are so lightened by popular touches that no dull line or lugubrious paragraph despoils the art of fiction. We are face to face with the issues of life, but we are face to face with them in the home, in the street, in the Church, and not in the schools. Mr. Hocking writes for men, not for students; for the living, throbbing crowds, and not for lean gaunt gowmsmen. Perhaps many of his readers may lose the philosophic element running through the book in the attractiveness of the story, in the intensity of the plot, or in the destiny of the hero. To those, however, of a more thoughtful turn, the under-current will be the charm, the sinuous trails of the human heart, and the deftness and relentlessness with which men sink all for self."

The BRITISH WEEKLY says:

"The secret of Mr. Hocking's power is that he is a born story-teller. 'The Heart of Man' is interesting from beginning to end, and though in many parts very painful, holds the reader."

The WESTERN DAILY PRESS says:

"In 'The Heart of Man' Mr. Silas K. Hocking has conferred a favour on the reading public in providing a reliable novel, the influence of which is sought in the thoughtful study of human nature as it is and contemplation of what it might be. The success of this excellent novel does not depend upon slim-built speculation on nineteenth-century discoveries, but upon a generous-minded examination of weaknesses more or less common to all, which have been the inheritance of mankind as far back as history can trace their power to blight the lives of men and women."

The QUEEN says:

"Mr. Silas K. Hocking's novels have a circulation which can only be compared to that enjoyed by the late Rev. E. P. Roe in the United States, and not only do they sell by tens of thousands, but they are read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested as the utterances of an inspired preacher of the gospel of humanity. 'The Heart of Man' shows the art of a story-teller born. The people in the book are real people, and the book has for its keynote justice—a keynote touched with marked ability."

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS—*Continued.*

The SCOTSMAN says:

"Mr. Hocking in his new story has struck a deeper vein of fiction than that which he has already worked. There is an 'intensity' in the style and a well-worked individuality in the characters which make the narrative one of unfailing interest."

The BIRMINGHAM DAILY GAZETTE says:

"Mr. Hocking is an author who relies on sterling merit rather than on the skilful manipulation of a passing craze to win renown. In his description of life in the Fens Mr. Hocking is seen at his best. The sluggish movements of the labourers, their quiet methods, their deep thought, their intense loves and hatreds, and their irresistible activity when roused to action, are portrayed with the hand of a kindly and sympathetic master. Dr. Merry, Marget, and Marget's father, Farmer Jenkins, and the local preacher, are life-like and real characters, such as might have stepped before us straight from the Fens. Mr. Hocking has done well in this, his latest volume. It is entertaining as a novel and instructive as a record of the workings of the human heart, while its moral tone and high principle are distinctly elevating."

The YORKSHIRE GAZETTE says:

"'The Heart of Man' adds one more to the list of entrancing tales by Silas K. Hocking; indeed, we are not sure that this is not the best that has yet proceeded from his pen. The plot is a powerful one, well conceived and well treated, whilst the story contains a fascinating description of life in the Fen Country, and an equally graphic sketch of our convict system. The love parts are cleverly worked in, and though the *finale* is sad, pathos has not been unduly played with."

The PEOPLE says:

"Mr. Hocking's 'The Heart of Man' bids fair to take rank among classic fiction. Never was success better deserved; it is a capital story."

The ABERDEEN FREE PRESS says:

"Mr. Hocking is a prolific writer. He has now written over a score of novels, and his pen shows no signs of flagging. His books are always fresh and marked by originality, and he rarely commits the unpardonable sin of prosing. 'The Heart of Man' shows even an advance on his former work. There is in it evidence of fuller power, if not in construction, at least in the drawing of character. Mr. Hocking has rarely done anything better than his description of the hunted man in the Fens"

For a Complete List of the Works of Mr. Silas K. Hocking see end of this Volume.

FOR SUCH IS LIFE



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"You cowards!" she said. "I'm ashamed of you!"

FOR SUCH IS LIFE.

BY

SILAS K. HOCKING, F.R.HIST.S.,

AUTHOR OF

"ONE IN CHARITY," "A SON OF REUBEN," "DOCTOR DICK," "WHERE DUTY LIES,"
"THE HEART OF MAN," "FOR ABIGAIL," ETC.

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FOR SUCH IS LIFE.

BOOK I.

TEMPTATION.

“ Build up heroic lives, and all
Be like a sheathen sabre,
Ready to flash out at God’s call,
O chivalry of labour!
Triumph and toil are twins, though they
Be singly born in sorrow,
And ’tis the martyrdom to-day
Brings victory to-morrow.”—GERALD MASSEY.

CHAPTER I.

AN ACCIDENT.

“ If God so guide our fate,
The nobler portions of ourselves shall last
Till all the lower rounds of life be past,
And we regenerate.”—LEWIS MORRIS.

ABRAM FOWEY sat in the shadow of a gum-tree, smoking. It was too hot to work. The stagnant air palpitated in the fierce rays of the sun. The blistered fields cracked and crumbled in the glare. Down in the creek, where the stream had been dammed back into pools, the cattle stood up to their bellies in water, and huddled together in the

shadow of the trees. The distant Bush lost itself in a shimmering haze. The wheat arish snapped and crackled in the blazing noon.

To anyone used to the roar and rush of city life, this Australian farmstead would have seemed oppressively quiet. Nothing stirred about the place. Not a bird fluttered in the trees. The servants lay about in the shadow, and panted or smoked, but no one was in the humour for speech.

Abram Fowey rested his back against the trunk of the tree, and appeared to be watching the blue wreath of smoke curling up from the bowl of his pipe. His shirt-sleeves were rolled up to the elbows. Coat and vest he had none. His thin duck trousers were tucked inside a pair of tall Wellington boots. His wideawake hat was tilted low on the back of his head.

Suddenly he started to his feet and took the pipe out of his mouth.

"I wonder who comes here," he said to himself, as a horse and its rider appeared over the brow of the hill. "A scorching day like this ain't fit for man or beast to be out," and he moved a little to the right to get a better view of the rider. Goolong Creek was not in the way of travellers. The road that ran through it led to nowhere in particular. Twenty miles beyond was virgin Bush — an unexplored country. Hence the sight of a horseman was an event, particularly in the middle of a reeking hot day.

"Shouldn't be surprised if 'twern't Trefusa come to look after those sheep," he muttered; "but he might have waited till the cool of the afternoon, at any rate. But just like him. Ay, it's him sure enough; nobody else would tear down that hill at such a breakneck pace. But what's he going to do next?" And Abram Fowey moved out from under the shadow of the gum-tree, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"The reckless fool! why can't he keep to the track, I wonder? He'd risk his neck any day to save haaf a mile. Surely, surely——" And Fowey ran two or three paces, then suddenly halted.

"As I'm a living man," he exclaimed, with clenched hands, "he's going to take that fence, and he knows how the ground dips suddenly on the other side. It'll be as much as his life is worth." And Abram ran a dozen paces further, and halted again.

"Pull up, you fool!" he shouted, at the top of his voice. "Don't you know——?"

But his warning came too late. As a matter of fact, the rider did not hear it. With a flying leap he took the fence, then horse and rider disappeared.

A minute later, the horse with distended nostrils and bridle flying loose came galloping toward the farmstead.

Abram waited for a few moments for the rider to appear, then ran back to the house and shouted, "Dan! Davey! Bill! Wake up, you lazy lubbers, and come along! Do you hear? Stir your stumps, and be quick about it!"

"What's up?" Dan asked indifferently, struggling to his feet.

"Man killed, like as not," the squatter answered. "Trefusa's horse has thrown him."

"Where?—how?" demanded two or three voices at the same time.

"Don't stay jawing there, but come along!" roared the squatter. And he started off at a run, followed by his hired men.

In a few minutes they reached the scene of the accident. Trefusa was lying on his side with a broken arm doubled underneath him, and blood flowing from a nasty cut in his forehead. He was deathly pale, and quite unconscious. Indeed, to all outward appearances he was dead.

"I reckon it's all up with him, governor," Davey remarked, with a slight shake in his voice.

"I don't know," the squatter remarked, getting down on his knees, and putting his ear close to the unconscious man's mouth.

"There's life in him yet," he said, after a moment of painful suspense; "we must get him to the house somehow."

It did not take them long to improvise a stretcher, on which they laid the wounded man very tenderly, and then bore him slowly to the house. It was a low building, constructed after the prevailing fashion of the country, with a broad veranda running all round it, and rooms opening from one into the other.

"Let's take him to my room," the squatter said, as they halted for a moment at the door. "Now, Betty, don't lose your head or go into hysterics. You'll need all your wits, if he's to be kept alive till the doctor can be got here."

This to the housekeeper, an elderly female who presided over the domestic arrangements of the house.

Betty controlled herself with great suddenness and success, and a few minutes later was bathing the wounded man's forehead with cold water as he lay on Fowey's bed.

The squatter stood a little back and watched the proceeding. There seemed nothing more that he could do. Dan had been despatched on the swiftest horse he had to Rokerstown—fifteen miles away—for the doctor, and until his arrival they could only wait and hope.

Trefusa lay quite still, faintly moaning now and then, but showing no signs of returning consciousness. His face was deathly pale, but the wound in his forehead had stopped bleeding, and his breathing seemed a little more regular, and not quite so feeble as at the first.

Suddenly, a thought struck the farmer, and without a word he left the room, and a few minutes later he returned with a small tumbler in his hand, half full of brandy-and-water.

"Stand aside, Betty," he said, "and let me see if I can get him to take this."

"You'll have to lift him up if you do," she answered, "and he's no light weight."

"Then suppose you get round to the other side," he said. "We shall be able to manage it between us."

"I think we'd better let him lie still," she answered; "it may hurt him to be moved."

"He don't feel anything," Fowey answered slowly, "and we're bound to keep life in him if we can."

"I wish the doctor were here," she said, after a pause; "we're only a-meddling in the dark."

"We're bound to do the best we can," was the answer.

"Ay, only we don't know what is best. He seems terribly hurt. I'm afraid it's a gone case with him."

The attempt to get the brandy-and-water down his throat proved a failure, and when Fowey laid down the glass, Betty stole quickly out of the room. She was beginning to feel hysterical, and did not want to make a scene. She knew if she could get a few minutes to herself, and have "a good cry," as she called it, she would feel better.

The farmer did not call her back. He went out a few minutes later and fetched a feather, and then sat down on the side of the bed and began to moisten the lips of the unconscious man with the brandy-and-water.

Fowey was generally a very silent man, and not given to emotion. But the accident to his neighbour had startled him out of himself. Not since his wife left him twelve months before had he been so troubled. Trefusa was his nearest neighbour, living only three miles away. Besides

that, they had a good deal in common ; and though neither of them knew anything of the other's past life, they knew enough of each other's recent troubles to make them sympathetic toward each other. They were both wifeless men. Trefusa's wife died less than six months before, leaving him with a baby who was then just a year old. Fowey's wife, alas ! was not dead. He would have been a happier man if he had buried her. She was a vain, heartless woman. He had met her in Melbourne, where she was an assistaut in a large drapery establishment. He fell in love with her almost at first sight. He thought she was the prettiest woman he had ever seen—save one—and when she received his attentions with evident pleasure he thought he was the happiest man alive.

She seemed to like him, and perhaps she did, after a fashion ; but it was not in her nature to love deeply. She imagined that to live away in the Bush would be delightful. She hated the city, she told him—hated the confinement of a house of business ; hated the long hours and the worry of discontented customers. To breathe the fresh air of the country, and have a horse to ride, and cows to milk, and chickens to look after, and a real house of her own, would be like paradise.

Abraham listened like a man in a dream, and never doubted that everything would be as she pictured it. So he married the city shop girl and carried her away into the country. For two months their sky was clear enough—as clear, at any rate, as they could reasonably hope for ; then the clouds began to gather.

In three months they both discovered that they had made a mistake. Abram, however, did not blame his wife : he blamed himself. He said it was not reasonable to expect that she would settle down to the quiet lonely life of the Bush and be contented therewith. She had lived all her life

in the city. That she should be fond of dress and company and amusements was the most natural thing in the world. He ought to have thought of all that beforehand. If blame there was, the blame was his.

This view of the case suited his wife exactly. She never had any thought of blaming herself. She persuaded herself that she was a much-wronged individual. The Bush was altogether so different from what she had been led to believe. The work of a farmhouse was hateful; it soiled her hands, and she had never been used to it. Moreover, she saw no one from week's end to week's end; her fashionable dresses were lying in her trunks unworn. There was no one to dress for at Goolong Creek, no one but her husband, and he was not worth considering.

For six months Abram coaxed and petted her as well as he knew how. But she grew tired of his caresses, and told him so—declared that he smelt of the farm-yard and the sheep-pens, and that she could not bear him to come near her. He did not say much, but slowly her utter heartlessness began to dawn upon him. Perhaps her pretty face—not nearly so pretty since she gave up painting it—began to pall upon him. At any rate, he grew sullen, and sometimes angry, and answered her back with bitter, biting words.

Twelve months after their marriage a little son was born, and Abram became a cheerful man again. He imagined that this new link would hold their lives together in love and concord, that the mystery of motherhood would transform his wife, and that she would become a different and a nobler woman.

His satisfaction, however, was of shorter duration than his first dream of happiness had been. The new care added a new and deeper note of bitterness to his wife's complaints. The burden of a baby, she declared, was intolerable. She rarely saw it, and seemed to feel no love for it. The poor

little waif was left to the care of Betty, the nurse, and Abram. The mother moped in her own room, and pined for the old life of the city.

So six months wore away, and then she took her departure. One morning when Abram was away from home a waggon drove up. She was evidently expecting it. She assisted to get her boxes into it with great energy. Then, mounting to the side of the driver, she was driven away.

Betty, who had been sent out to the hen-run, and had taken baby with her, returned just in time to see her climb into the waggon.

"Are you coming back again to-day, mum?" she asked, in wide-eyed astonishment.

"No, I'm not," was the sharp reply.

"When, then?"

"I don't know. Perhaps next year, perhaps never."

Betty ran after the retreating waggon. "What shall I say to the master?" she called.

"Tell him he needn't follow, for he won't find me," floated back the answer.

"And won't you kiss baby?" she cried, holding the child high in her hands. But there was no response. The waggon jolted noisily over the uneven road, and a cloud of dust rose up behind and almost blotted it from view.

Betty stood as if rooted to the spot until the vehicle had disappeared over the brow of the hill; then with a big sob she turned back into the house and sat down. Had not the baby claimed her attention, she would probably have given way to hysterics, but under the present circumstances that luxury was denied her. So she had to console herself with the delivery of a fiery and vehement speech, which, fortunately for the baby, he was too young to understand.

Abram Fowey did not return to his home till the evening of the following day. Betty saw him coming, and went to

meet him with the baby in her arms. He saw by her face that something was amiss, and prepared himself for the worst. In a few hurried sentences she told him everything. He did not reply. His face betrayed very little emotion. He was not the man to rave and tear his hair, but he felt none the less deeply because he kept his grief and anger to himself.

His first impulse was to turn his horse's head and follow her, but the impulse lasted only a moment. He did not know where she had gone. Her departure had evidently been carefully planned. It was no sudden decision she had come to. Her mind had been made up for weeks, perhaps for months; hence it would be of no use searching for her, or trying to bring her back. Even if he succeeded in tracing her, and in dragging her back home against her will, he would gain nothing by it. She would go away again on the first opportunity. At any rate, it was of no use acting hastily. She had had thirty hours' start, and any search, to be successful now, would have to be carefully planned.

Betty walked by the side of his horse back to the house, and waited for him to speak, but he had no words with which to answer her. When he did speak, it was to Dan.

"Here, take Bess, and groom her well," he said; then, with bent head, he walked silently into the house.

That was twelve months ago; and as he sat on the side of the bed this hot afternoon and moistened Trefusa's lips, it all came back to him again as though it had been yesterday. He had made inquiries in all directions for his missing wife, but without avail. Had the earth opened and swallowed her up, she could not have hidden herself more effectually. It was very clear that she did not want to return, that she had no love for either husband or child.

That was the most painful of all his reflections. It tortured him so, that when Trefusa's wife died six months

later he almost envied him. Trefusa could cherish her memory, and keep her grave green, and plant flowers above her pure and moveless breast, while he could never allude to his wife, never breathe her name before others.

It was a terrible cross, and one that embittered his whole life. He was rapidly becoming a misanthrope, and was losing all faith in God and man. There were times when he felt it would be a positive relief if he could wreak his anger on something or somebody. To serve somebody else as he had been served would help to balance things; at present all the injustice was on one side.

Trefusa took his trouble in quite a different way. Instead of growing sullen and silent, he had become reckless and boisterous, had assumed a defiant, don't-care attitude, and occasionally took more drink than was good for him. In the old days when his wife was alive, he would never have taken that daring leap from which he was suffering now. It seemed sometimes as if he wanted to break his neck, so that he might rejoin her in the better country that lay outside the storms and troubles of earth.

Abram Fowey scarcely took his eyes from the face of the unconscious man during the whole of that long, sultry afternoon. He was not a profound thinker, and yet, somehow, to-day he could not help looking into the eyes of that strange mystery which we call life. Never before did its depths seem so profound, so unfathomable. Never before did he feel so small, so utterly helpless; never did life seem so little worth living.

He was but a young man yet — just turned thirty. Humanly speaking, he had already seen the best of his days, and yet there was very little in the past that he could recall with any degree of pleasure. Toil and struggle, sorrow and disappointment, seemed the chief ingredients in the cup. Even his love episodes—and there had been two

of them—had been only like the brilliant dawn that heralds a stormy day. Even his childhood, in that far-away Cornish home, had been one of constant hardship, and his youth one of unbroken toil for the bare necessities of life. His early manhood found him crowded out of the land of his birth by oppression and overreaching avarice, and for the last nine or ten years he had been an exile in the Australian Bush, toiling desperately with one object in view, and that to earn sufficient to enable him, in his declining years at least, to return to his native land, and spend the evening of his life amid the scenes and with the companions of his youth.

He wondered in a vague way if he would ever realize that poor ambition. As he looked at it now, it seemed a very small matter whether he did or didn't. Then his thoughts turned to Trefusa. Perhaps he had struggled for a similar hope, and this looked like the end.

Several hours had passed since the accident, and there was no sign of returning consciousness yet. Perhaps he was dying, and if so, what then? Was it not better that he should never wake again to the worry and pain of life? If there was a better country, such as the preachers used to describe when he was a boy, why, then it would be far better that he slipped peacefully away. Or even if there was nothing at all beyond—if death ended everything—it would still be better that he should never wake again.

The sun began to get low at length, and a cool breeze sprang up from the south. The wounded man moaned more frequently, and rolled his head from side to side. Betty came back into the room, having finished her household duties. Baby was asleep in his cot.

No word was spoken, however. They waited in silence, while the shadows deepened, for the sound of hoofs that should tell of the arrival of the doctor.

CHAPTER II.

PAST AND PRESENT.

“Men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages.”
SHAKESPEARE.

EARLY on the following morning Abram stole silently into the sick man's room. The doctor was sitting in an easy-chair by the bedside, having watched by his patient all the night.

“He is sleeping now,” the doctor whispered, in reply to Abram's inquiring glance. “He will be quite conscious when he wakes again.”

“Is there any chance for him?” Abram asked in the same low tones, but before the doctor could reply, Trefusa had opened his eyes and smiled feebly.

“I fear I've disturbed you,” Abram said, taking a step forward.

“Oh no; I heard you come in,” Trefusa answered, but in a voice so feeble that Abram had the greatest difficulty in catching what he said.

“I'm glad you've come round again,” Fowey said after a pause. “I thought yesterday you were never coming to.”

“Yes, I'm glad also; but it won't be for long. Doctor doesn't think there's any chance for me.”

"I did not say so," the doctor answered quickly, administering at the same time a stimulating draught.

"Not in so many words, perhaps," was the reply; "but your evasions are quite sufficient for me. I know you think I'm a goner." He spoke in a half-flippant, half-indifferent manner, as though it was a matter that did not trouble him in the least.

"I don't deny that you are very seriously hurt," the doctor replied, "and still think if you have any business affairs to settle it would be well you should do so at once. You'll not die any sooner for having settled your worldly affairs."

"Quite right, doctor," the sick man answered cheerfully. "Fortunately, I've precious little to settle, and were it not for the kid, I should not have a regret."

"I presume you have relatives somewhere?" the doctor questioned.

"Yes, I've relatives; but unfortunately they don't count."

"Are they in the colony?"

"No; they are back in the old country. You see, it's this way: I'm a younger son, and of course a prodigal, though I don't know that I ever did much that I regret. My unpardonable sin was in marrying the orphan child of a man my father hated like poison. Lucy Dale could not help that. She loved me, and I loved her, and so we married. You can easily guess the rest. My father vowed that he would never forgive me, and never even see me again. On the second of these counts he will have no choice. He will never see me again. Whether he forgives me or no is a matter of no consequence. He may, however, sufficiently relent when he hears I'm gone as to take the little un; but even that is doubtful. My brother Thomas has a lad of his own, and he will resent a child of mine having a crumb."

"At any rate, should anything happen to you, you would like your father to be communicated with."

"Yes; it's right the old man should know. If you or Fowey will write to him, why, I shall be much obliged. But it's the little one that troubles me."

"Don't let that worry you, Trefusa," Fowey said huskily. "I've got a motherless bairn of my own, and if I were in your place, I believe you'd do as much for me. The little one can come here."

The dying man's eyes filled in a moment, and all the old flippancy and seeming indifference vanished as if by magic.

"Give us your hand, Fowey," he said brokenly; "you've always been a good neighbour."

"We've had trouble in common," the other answered; "but we'll not talk of that now."

"With me trouble's nearly over," Trefusa said, with a far-away look in his eyes. "I wonder if I shall find Lucy again."

"If what the parsons say is true you will," Fowey answered huskily. "She'll be on the lookout for you, and mighty pleasant it will be for you to meet again." And as he spoke a pained look came into his own eyes, for he thought of his own loveless life, and the cheerless journey that lay before him.

"I'm sorry to burden you with my little one," Trefusa said after a long pause, "especially—especially——"

"I know what you want to say," Fowey interrupted; "but if she were here she might object. Now I can do as I like, and the two little ones will be company for each other."

"There'll be a hundred or two when everything is sold," the dying man whispered. "If the doctor will draw up a bit of an agreement, I will sign it while I have the strength. You can use it as far as it will go. Perhaps the old dad will send for the little one before it's all done."

"The little one will cost nothing to keep," Fowey answered. "One mouth more on a ranch makes no difference."

"He's a good little chap, anyhow, and won't give much trouble to anybody," Trefusa answered. "I'd like to kiss the little fellow before I go."

"Dan will go and fetch him," said Fowey, and started up at once and left the room.

An hour later the wondering baby was laid on his father's feeble right arm. It was a pathetic picture, and one that moved all present to tears. Even the doctor found it convenient to get up and leave the room.

"I hope he'll not prove a burden to you, Fowey," the dying man said huskily. Then, turning his head, he kissed the sweet, bonny face of the child again and again.

The little one laughed and crowed, and tried to push its dimpled fingers into its father's weary eyes; then clutched his beard, and pulled with might and main.

Trefusa smiled wistfully.

"It's a mercy the little chap doesn't know," he said, "and he'll never remember. Father and mother will only be names to him—only names."

Fowey tried to say something at this point, but his voice failed him, and for several minutes there was silence in the room.

"You may leave me alone now," Trefusa said at length. "I would like to pray."

So they took the child from him, and left the room. With eager eyes he followed the fair, chubby face till the door came between; then, with a sigh, he turned his head on one side, and seemed as if he had fallen asleep.

When Fowey and the doctor returned to the room a few minutes later they found that God's angel, Death, had been before them. Trefusa had gone away into the Silent Land.

Fowey did not realize all he had undertaken until several weeks had passed away. Under the influence of strong emotion it was easy enough to promise to take charge of a baby, but when he discovered that the promise involved all the duties and responsibilities of trusteeship, the winding-up of an estate, the writing of innumerable letters, and the proper investment of money, he began to look serious, and to feel even more serious than he looked. He wished in his heart that Trefusa had left nothing. Had he adopted a penniless child there would have been an end to the whole business, but the administration of this orphan's small estate was a great deal more bother than it was worth.

He made a discovery, also, in going through Trefusa's papers, the significance of which he did not realize at the time, but which he felt keenly enough in the years that followed. He gave a little start when the truth dawned upon him, and held his breath for a moment; but he quickly recovered from his astonishment, though he could think of nothing else for the rest of the day. And even when he got to bed the discovery kept him wide awake.

"To think he should be the son of that man!" he kept saying to himself. "To think that I should actually befriend a descendant of that old wretch; that I should even adopt his grandchild—the thing seems incredible!"

The facts, however, were clear enough. Of the identity of the man who had died in his house there was no longer any doubt. He was the son of a man he regarded with bitterest hate—a man who had robbed him of his patrimony, cheated him out of his birthright, evicted him from his home, and driven him forth an exile from his native land for ten long years and more. His hatred and anger had grown until he felt sometimes that he would gladly lose his soul for the pleasure of having his revenge on this man. How he would rejoice if he could but make him

suffer ! with what delight he would torment him if ever the opportunity came his way ! Had God or fate put this child into his hands, he wondered, to be used for this purpose ?

He put the thought aside as quickly as possible. He had promised to care for the little one—promised before he knew in what relationship it stood to the man he hated—and it would not be right that an innocent child should be mixed up in any schemes of revenge that he might cherish.

“ No,” he said to himself ; “ I must do my duty to the bairn, whatever comes or goes. But if I could only twist the neck of his grandfather, it would ease my soul.”

And then there came up before his mind’s eye a picture that often haunted his memory. A picture of a sweet Cornish homestead, with an apple orchard at the back, and green meadows beyond, and a slope of upland on the other side of the trout stream, where the fields were larger, and the corn ripened in the summer time. It was a snug little farm of fifty acres or so, which his father had purchased with the savings of a lifetime, and which he had reclaimed mostly with the labour of his own hands.

Originally his grandfather had held it on a lease of three lives. It was all “ downs ” then (except the orchard and meadows), covered with furze and heather, and having scarcely any value at all. But long years of labour had gradually reclaimed the wilderness, and each harvest time saw more corn grown than before. Then the ground landlord, being always short of cash, consented to sell the freehold, and Abram’s father was only too glad to buy it. But to find the money he had to mortgage the little estate, and interests were heavy in those days. But with hard work and painful frugality the amount of mortgage was lessened every year till the last penny of it was wiped off. It was a glad day for the Foweyes, father and son, when their little estate was free. They invited most of their

friends and neighbours to what they called a high tea, and had a "jollification" in honour of the event.

The next day the old man put on his holiday clothes, and went out across the fields swinging a walking-stick.

"I don't intend to work any more," he said to a neighbour. "I've slaved for fifty years, and pinched myself, too, but now that the place is free, why, I'm a-goin' to take it easy."

In this determination his son Abram backed him up.

"If you do a stroke more work, father, you're a fool!" he said. "You've worked long enough for any one man. Besides, there ain't no necessity. We've no rent to pay, or interest either."

"You needn't use any arguments," the old man said, with a smile; "for I don't require none. I made up my mind years and years ago that if I lived to clear off the mortgage I'd work no more."

"I expect you'll be wanting to do a bit now and then," Abram answered, "just to keep your hand in."

"I may want just to show you young uns how it's done sometimes," was the reply, "but I shan't call it work. No, I've given over workin';-but I do wish yer mother 'd been alive to see this day."

"Ay, mother died too soon," Abram answered.

"And we were married too late," the old man replied. "We were getting old when you were born. I don't want you to make the same mistake, Abie; get away an' marry the maid they tell me thou'rt after as soon as thou likes."

"Do you mean it, father?" Abram asked in surprise.

"Ay, mean it! I was never more in earnest in my life. The house 'ud be all the better with a woman in it, an thou'lt be able to dress her as well as any woman in the parish."

"But Kitty is only young yet," Abram said demurely,

"and I don't know what she would say if I said anything about marriage to her."

"But they tell me thou hast been courtin' her for six months or better."

"Well, I have been going with her," Abram answered sheepishly, "but we've never talked that way."

"What way does ta mean?"

"Why, that way."

"Then, what way hast thou talked? Hasn't 'a made love to her?"

"I expect she knows I want her."

"Oh, lor'! I don't understand such courtin'," said the old man, with a laugh. "In my young days we were warmer than that. And thou hastn't towld her, eh?"

"Folks don't tell such things right off," said Abram, with downcast eyes. Be it remembered he had only just turned twenty, and had not lived his life in a city.

"Oh, well, take thy own time about it, Abie," the old man said at length, "but thou'rt better off than most lads. The cage is ready for the bird any time she likes to come home."

For the next month the two Foweyes lived in a little paradise of their own. Abram found Kitty Treleven quite ready to listen to all he had to say, and the old man found "doing nothing" the rarest treat he had ever known.

Some of his neighbours, however, were having rather an anxious time. It was rumoured that Sir Henry Probus, who owned most of the parish, had sold the whole of his estate to one Peter Trefusa, and what this change might portend they none of them knew.

Sir Henry was a spendthrift, no doubt, but he was a very considerate landlord, for all that, and was always prepared to do the best he could for his tenants. But if report spoke

truly, Trefusa was a perfect skinflint, who would wring out of his tenants every possible farthing.

Hence all those who had rented farms from Sir Henry heard of the change with serious misgiving and alarm. That rents would be raised they had little doubt. They might be evicted, for all they knew, without compensation.

Old John Fowey heard the news with profound indifference. His farm was his own. Whoever might go or stay, he was safe. Trefusa or Probus, it was all the same to him. He was his own landlord, and could snap his fingers at the biggest magnate in the land.

John's triumph, however, was only short-lived. A month later he received a letter, in which he was informed that Peter Trefusa disputed the legality of his title, and claimed his farm as part and parcel of the estate which he had purchased from Sir Henry Probus. This information was contained in three foolscap pages of legal jargon, which during the first reading John could make neither head nor tail of. It was not until he had struggled through the wordy and involved epistle three or four times that the truth began to dawn upon him.

For the next six months John lived like a man in a dream—a painful, troubled dream, from which he struggled in vain to get free. Abram was scarcely less overwhelmed by the impending calamity. The wickedness and cruelty of the whole proceeding appalled him; his utter helplessness almost drove him to despair. Peter Trefusa knew as well as anyone that John Fowey had not only made the farm by the labour of his own hands, but that he had purchased the freehold with the savings of a lifetime. That, however, was a matter that did not trouble him. He was not concerned with the question of moral rights. He had reason to believe that Fowey's legal title was defective, that his deeds were

really of no value, that as a matter of fact he had been swindled.

He admitted, of course, that it was very hard on Fowey, but was virtuously indignant at the suggestion that he was acting unfairly in the matter. He had purchased the *whole* estate—not the estate minus Fowey's farm, and so he was only claiming what he had paid for. This was a barefaced lie, but he repeated it so often that at last he almost got to believe it was true.

To the chagrin of the legal gentlemen engaged in it, the case proved altogether too simple. They dragged it out as long as they could, but it was clear from the first that in law John had scarcely a leg to stand on. Equity, they admitted, was all on his side; but they had nothing to do with equity. The law of the land would have to be adhered to though the heavens fell and the earth cried out for vengeance.

When John heard that the case had gone against him, that he had lost his all, he sat down on the nearest chair and never spoke again. They carried him home and used every means to restore him to consciousness, but without avail. The cruel blow had broken the old man's heart.

Abram bore his loss with remarkable fortitude. So people said. Outwardly, he betrayed little or no emotion. He felt his utter helplessness, the futility of crying out or raising any protest. The Fates were against him. The cruel hand of the rich had done its worst. He stood alone in the world. Empty-handed he would have to begin life over again, and the sooner he began the better.

When next he went to see Kitty Treleven, he discovered how much change of circumstances will do for a man. Kitty was not at home; her parents, who were well-to-do farmers, had sent her away to Plymouth on a long visit to some friends.

Would they give him her address? They said they would not, as Kitty did not wish to have any further communication with him. Their Kitty had many chances, and it was not likely she would throw herself away on a penniless man.

They said many other things which rankled in the young man's bosom and intensified the bitterness of his heart.

He hoped that he might see Kitty again face to face before he left home. He looked for her in the crowd when his ship sailed from Plymouth, strained his eyes landward long after the anchor was weighed; but it was not to be. Kitty never came near him, never again lifted her sweet eyes to his.

All this happened ten years before our story opens; but the memory of it was as fresh in Abram Fowey's mind as at the first. He had hoped that away in the Australian Bush he would be able to forget the past; but memory was not to be coerced, and the bitterness in his heart remained as strong as ever. Indeed, every circumstance tended to bring the past more and more vividly back to him. The Fates seemed to conspire together not to allow him to forget. Even his marriage, which he had fondly hoped would open up for him a new and happier life, had but served to accentuate the contrast between the present and the past. And now, to crown all the rest, he had been left with the care of old Trefusa's grandchild, the possible heir of all his wealth. What was the meaning of it? Was it the ruling of a wise Providence or of a malicious Fate, or was it a simple chance in the events of life that had no significance at all?

Fowey debated this question through many sleepless nights, but never got any nearer a solution of the problem.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPRINGS OF CONDUCT.

“Men will always act according to their passions. Therefore the best government is that which inspires the noblest passions and destroys the meaner.”—SIR W. JONES.

IN a few weeks Fowey had, to all outward appearance, got back again into the old ruts, and life went on at Goolong Creek as though nothing had ever happened to disturb its quiet and repose. But a man's true life is not without, but within; yet neither by word nor action did Fowey, for many months, betray the thoughts that were working in his mind—the stern battle that he fought with himself day after day without intermission.

In the abstract he did not know why he should fight any battle at all, why he should hesitate for a moment to listen to the voice of the tempter. To be revenged on Peter Trefusa seemed on the face of it a very proper thing, a duty he owed to the memory of his father, as well as to every oppressed serf in his native land. In the laws of his country he was convinced there was no redress, for had they not been made by the rich in the interests of the rich? At least, such was his belief, a belief confirmed by his own painful experience. Hence, for a poor man to get any satisfaction in that direction was out of the question. What then? Would Heaven interfere? He did not know. There was a belief or a superstition in existence when he

was a boy, that Heaven did befriend the poor, that the prayers of the oppressed and downtrodden were specially acceptable, and that Providence did work in the interests of right and truth.

But he had to confess to himself that he saw very little evidence of it. Heaven had not interfered to save either his father or himself. The old man had been allowed to die, and he had been exiled from his home for ten long years, and Providence had done nothing to rectify the wrong.

Moreover, if Heaven did interfere, would it not be through human agency? What was the meaning of this curious freak of Fate or Fortune, which threw the old man's grand-child into his hands? Was there not a chance put in his way by which, in the future, he might right the wrong?

On the whole, however, he was inclined to think that help was not to be looked for any more in Divine Providence than in human laws. Men were turned adrift to fight their own battles and avenge their own wrongs in the way that seemed best to themselves.

Of course, if they liked, they could tamely submit, bear insult without retaliation, lie down and let men trample upon them. But that would simply encourage the oppressor, and make him more arrogant than before. As a matter of fact, had not one class of people submitted so long to be trampled upon, that those who kept them under feet regarded it as a religious duty to do so, and resented any complaint or protest as a personal insult to themselves? Evidently, if people liked to submit to oppression, there were plenty who would play the part of oppressor, and would feel no conscientious qualms in doing so.

Take his own case. Old Peter Trefusa had deliberately stolen his patrimony, robbed him of his home, and banished him from his native land, and neither heaven nor earth had interfered, or was likely to. For ten long years he had

submitted tamely and in silence ; but was he to submit to the end of the chapter ? If the chance came in his way of punishing his enemy and righting the wrong, was he not to seize it ? If he, by cunning, could do what old Peter had done by cash, and on a much larger scale, would he not be a fool not to do it ?

The thought of revenge had long been absent from his mind. He had felt from the first that he could only chafe in impotent rage. He might, like a caged bird, beat himself to death against his prison bars, but he could not touch his captor. The man who had wronged him was beyond his reach.

But the custody of Edward Trefusa's child had changed the complexion of things. This little one might yet be heir to the Pendormic estates. There was only one life between, or two at the very outside. Tom Trefusa was not likely to live long. He was a notoriously fast liver, and had been since he was a youth. Moreover, he was constitutionally delicate, and so his disappearance from the scene of action might be chronicled any day. Then the race would be between his son and this baby.

Of course, young Alfred, who would now be four or five years of age, might live to be an old man and have a family of his own, in which case Edward's child might not get a finger in the pie at all. But in case Alfred died before marrying, or died without issue, then the estates would descend directly to Edward's child.

There was also a third contingency. The property was not entailed, and old Peter, learning that his son Edward had left a son behind him, might be disposed to divide the property equally.

Admitting that he was terribly angry with his younger son for marrying against his will ; admitting that he vowed with oaths and imprecations that he would cut him off with

a shilling and never look upon his face again : admitting that he had nursed his anger up to the present time—what was there unreasonable in the supposition that the news of his son's untimely death would change his feelings entirely, and lead him to extend compassion to the child that he had denied to the father ?

If rumour spoke truly, in the old days Edward was Peter's favourite son, and blood was thicker than water any day ; and hard and bitter as the old man might be, when news reached him that the lad he loved the best was dead, it would be certain to touch some tender place in his heart, and the probabilities were he would be anxious to make atonement for his cruelty by a double share of kindness to the orphan child.

All this seemed quite clear and plain to Abram Fowey as he turned it over and over in his mind. What then ? How should he act in case his surmise came true ? Should he seek to be quits with old Peter ? Should he substitute his own child for the other, or should he allow his wrongs to remain unredressed for ever ?

This was the question that haunted him and agitated him, and made him at times so weak and nerveless that he was unfit for anything. He would often let his pipe go out as he sat watching the two babies sprawling on a rug in the shadow of the gum-trees. They were so much alike that he hardly knew one from the other. There was only a fortnight's difference in their ages, while, strangely enough, they were both named Edward. It really seemed to him as if the Fates had deliberately conspired to put this chance in his way, so that he might defeat the wicked ambition of old Peter, and transfer the estates to his own descendants.

Of course he would run some little risk in making the exchange. Betty knew which was which. There was no confusion in her mind as to the identity of the children.

Indeed, she declared they weren't a bit alike. In her eyes Trefusa's baby was not to be compared with the master's child.

But Betty was only an ignorant woman, and he could easily invent a story that would satisfy her. Besides, if she ever got to know and chose to talk, the chatter of an ignorant woman away in the solitudes of an Australian Bush would not be likely to reach the ears of people in England. On the whole, he could think of nothing simpler or easier, or attended with fewer risks.

By a simple exchange he could get back into his family the farm that rightly belonged to them, which had been hardly worked for and honestly paid for. In addition to which the tables would be completely turned on Peter. The biter would be bitten, the robber would himself be robbed, and all his wicked schemings would be frustrated.

Of course there was another side to the question, which Abram saw clearly enough, and which was not without its influence upon his conduct. If he carried out his little scheme without hitch or mishap, old Peter would remain practically untouched. If he never knew he would never feel. The punishment would fall upon his grandchild, and so the innocent would be made to suffer for the guilty. Still, that seemed to be quite in harmony with the moral government of the world. The Bible said unmistakably enough that the sins of the fathers were visited upon their children to the third and fourth generation, and what the Bible said, human experience confirmed. Hence, if he was to be revenged on Peter and have his rights at the same time, he could not afford to stand on niceties of that kind. It was no worse for Trefusa's son to suffer loss than that his own son should be robbed.

Abram, however, did not deny to himself, even in his worst and most revengeful moments, that he would have

preferred some other way of getting back his own. To do the very thing that he blamed Peter for doing, and then attempt to justify himself, was not only bad logic, it was also very crooked morality. He had been taught to believe in his young days that two blacks never made a white, and that bit of proverbial philosophy clung to him still. He was not a bad man at heart—at least, he was no worse than the average. But he was faced by a temptation the like of which few men ever encounter; besides which, the experiences of his life had soured his nature. To wrong a man is not, as a rule, the best way to make a saint of him. Flowers grow best in the sunshine.

Had a better, a more equitable way of getting back his own presented itself to him, he would not have considered the question of exchanging the babies for another moment. But, fortunately, no other way did present itself, or was likely to. This was his only chance, and if he did not seize it, the door would be shut against him and his for ever. The little farm so hardly earned would be irrevocably lost, and the Foweyes would remain to the end of time exiles from their native land.

When Abram's mind got on that track he felt absolutely certain what he would do when the time came.

"It was not in human nature or in human reason," he declared, "to submit quietly to such wrongs as he had endured. If a man had any remnants of manhood in him, he would strike when such a chance was offered."

But there were times when he was in a totally different mood; when he called himself a fool for debating the question at all; when he vowed that he did not believe old Peter would relent in the smallest degree, and that the probabilities were he would never reply to the letter that had been sent to him.

Sometimes his thoughts ran in quite a virtuous vein; he

would even read his Bible for a full hour at a stretch, and try to persuade himself that it was better to suffer in the right than succeed in the wrong.

But, as a needle, deflected for a moment from the pole, will fly back again directly the counter-attraction has been removed, so Abram's thoughts would always return to the old theme, and to the chances of a successful issue.

The first hint he gave of this moral struggle, and of the resolutions that were slowly forming in his mind, was a command to Betty that she should treat the children exactly alike.

"Why, master, I do!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes," he said, in some little confusion; "but they are getting more knowing every day, and I don't want 'em to know anything."

"Not anything, master?"

"Not anything about the past. I want no distinctions, you understand. Dress 'em both alike, and let neither of 'em feel that there is any difference."

"But you'll tell the other baby when he's old enough to understand?" she questioned.

"No; that is the very thing I want to warn you against. That's the reason I've spoken to you to-day. It's no use shutting the stable door when the horse is gone."

"I don't know what you mean," she said, in some confusion.

"I don't mean anything," he said tartly, growing red in the face—"that is, I don't mean anything but what is for the children's good and comfort. Now, it's just this way——"

And Betty folded her arms underneath her apron, and prepared herself to listen.

"Children are awkward little animals to deal with, especially boys. They've a deal of what I call natural

cussedness in 'em. They're contrary and spiteful, and ready to take any mean advantage——"

"Oh, lor, how you talk!" broke in Betty. "One would think you'd reared a houseful of 'em."

"No, I ain't reared any," he said uneasily; "but I know 'em, for all that. I was a boy myself once, and I understand their ways, and if you give one boy the smallest advantage over another, you may wager your Sunday's dinner that he'll make the most of it, and there'll be squalls, and any number of 'em."

"Well?" said Betty interrogatively, thinking her master was a long time beating about the bush, but not having the courage to say so.

"Well, don't you see that if my boy, when he gets a bit bigger, happens to find out that the other does not belong to me—a kind of dependent, as it were, an orphan without friends or relations—why, he'll put on him as sure as he's a living boy."

"Why should he?" Betty asked innocently.

"Why should he? That's more than I or anybody else knows. I expect it's just boy nature. And the other boy would be just as bad if he found out that his father had left him a bit of money—perhaps worse. We should have 'em fighting like dog and cat, and calling names worse than cowboys."

"Very likely they'll fight in any case," Betty said.

"Oh, very likely," he answered, with a laugh. "They'll be curious boys if they don't."

"And they're never to know anything about—about——"

"About the past," Abram put in. "My boy needn't know anything about his mother, or the other about his father. I don't want any mud-throwing. It's best on every ground that they should be kept in ignorance. I want to treat Trefusa's boy exactly as if he were my own. Poor

little beggar! he's in a hard world, and I don't want him even to feel that he's in any way living on charity."

"But what about their names?" Betty questioned. "They've both been christened alike."

"Oh, there need be no difficulty on that score! Call one Ned and the other Edie, and as they get older let 'em think they are twins."

"It's a curious mix-up, anyhow," Betty said, with a look of perplexity in her eyes.

"Nothing of the sort," he answered shortly. "There'll be no mix-up unless you go mixing 'em up yourself. Drop Trefusa altogether; forget him if you can. These two children are mine—Ned and Edie Fowey."

Betty, however, was not altogether satisfied even now.

"It'll be more trouble than it's worth," she said at length, with a toss of her head.

Abram got a bit impatient. "Haven't I told you it's to save trouble?" he said severely.

"Ay, but I don't see it. There's Dan and Davey and the rest of 'em; they'll let the cat out of the bag if I don't."

"They're all leaving in a month except Dan, and I shall tell him what I have told you, though it won't matter if I don't. He never bothers with the bairns, and I question if he knows one from the other."

"Oh, don't he?" laughed Betty; "Dan is none as innocent as he looks."

"At any rate, he always does what he's told."

"Exactly; but there's one of the bairns squalling;" and she darted off into the kitchen.

Abram thrust his hands into his pockets and began to reflect, as he had been in the habit of doing of late.

"Well, at any rate, I've committed myself to nothing as yet," he said to himself; "and all things considered, it's best the brats should grow up in ignorance—at least, while

they're with me. It ain't likely, however much old Peter relents, that he'll ask to have the baby sent to England right away; so it's possible I shall have him on my hands for some years to come; and so much the better. One is apt to make mistakes when he does things in a hurry. I want to have plenty of time, so that I may make sure." And he rose to his feet and sauntered out into the autumn sunshine.

A few weeks later, returning home one evening, he found Dan wheeling both the children in a barrow, evidently to their great delight, for they were gesticulating and crowing in the wildest excitement.

"Hullo, Dan, constituted yourself chief nurse, eh?" he questioned.

"I'm trying to keep 'em quiet a bit," he said, "while Betty does her baking."

"They seem to like it, anyhow."

"Ay, they're like young kittens—as full of fun as they can stick."

"Their troubles are all to come," Abram said reflectively. "I always feel sorry for that bairn of Trefusa's. I suppose he thinks he's my child—that is, if he thinks at all—and then when he grows up somebody 'll tell him different, and change everything for him."

"Ay, unless you choose to keep it dark."

"It would be a good thing if it could be done," Abram answered.

"They'd think they were twins," said Dan.

"Exactly; I should like 'em to grow up thinking so."

The pupils of Dan's small gray eyes seemed to contract for a moment.

"I don't see why they should be told," said Dan after a long pause, during which he made them more comfortable in the barrow.

“Nor I. I think we’d better not tell ’em. What say you?”

“Decidedly, sir—decidedly.” And Dan started off at a trot, much to the delight of the youngsters, who were getting impatient at being kept in one place.

Dan’s face was a study for the next ten minutes, but he kept well out of sight. Dan never did anything himself without a motive, and he never imagined that anyone else would do a thing without having a sufficient reason for it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM.

“The end crowns all,
And that old common arbitrator, Time,
Will one day end it.”

WHEN three months had elapsed after the despatch of his letter to Peter Trefusa, informing him of the death of his son Edward, and of the existence of a little Edward the second, Fowey began to look out somewhat anxiously for a reply to his communication.

In order to put Trefusa off his guard and hide his own identity, he had written his name as it was pronounced, “A. Foy.” “For,” he said to himself, “if I sign my name in the usual way, he will conclude in a moment that I am the man he robbed, and will think in all probability that I am playing him a trick.”

So he wrote his name phonetically, and sincerely hoped that it sufficiently concealed his identity. But three months passed, and four, and no answer came, and the four grew into six, and still Peter did not reply.

Then Abram wrote a second time, explaining fully the circumstances of the case, and intimating that all the documents necessary to prove the identity of the youthful

Edward were in his possession, and that he was ready when called upon by the child's relatives to do so to surrender custody of the infant.

This letter evidently reached its destination, whatever became of the first, for three months later the reply reached Goolong Creek addressed to A. Foy, Esq.

Abram tore open the envelope with a hand that trembled a good deal in spite of every effort to keep it still, and read the following laconic epistle :

"Mr. Trefusa begs to acknowledge the receipt of the letter of Mr. A. Foy, bearing date July 23, 18—.

"PENDORMIC HALL,
"September 13, 18—."

Abram turned over the blank pages, then looked into the envelope, then upon the floor, to make sure he had dropped nothing; then read the letter again, replaced it in the envelope, took his hat from the peg, and went out.

He felt too stunned to remain in the house. He wanted to be alone to think. He needed time to gather his wits together and shape his plans for the future.

For the moment he felt all the humiliation of an ignominious defeat. Peter Trefusa was more than a match for him. He had defeated him before and his father before him, and to all appearance he would defeat him again.

All this did not help in the development of Abram's virtuous side. It made him all the more determined to cheat Peter or his heirs out of the estate if ever the opportunity presented itself. It largely destroyed such qualms of conscience as had been troubling him during the last six months.

"This has settled it," he said to himself with clenched fists. "I've been wobbling and wavering, now thinking I would, and now that I wouldn't, ever since Trefusa died ;

but I shall not wobble any more after this. My turn will come some day and I will do it."

He had not as completely mastered himself, however, as he imagined. His conscience had a curious habit of waking up at unexpected times. Sometimes he would start suddenly out of his sleep, having dreamed that he was being executed for some deed never clearly defined, but which was always in some way connected with Trefusa.

At such times he would lie awake for hours in real distress of mind, but would ultimately comfort himself with the reflection that he had not as yet committed himself to anything; that he had simply turned over in his mind certain contingencies—contingencies that might never arise in his life-time, and consequently that he could not be accused of a wrong that he had never committed.

The better side of Abram's nature generally came most freely into play in the night-time. He thought his best thoughts when the stars came out and the Southern Cross burned high overhead. The Australian Bush is very solemn and silent in the night-time; the stillness is oppressive till one gets used to it, and in those fearsome hours when he could not sleep, Abram would resolve to put away all wrong thoughts, to be honest in heart as well as in act.

But in the daytime he felt differently. The sight of lonely stretches of hard-baked earth and stunted undergrowth would bring back to him the memory of that pretty Cornish homestead in which he had hoped to live and die. He had never become reconciled to Australian Bush life. He liked it almost less now than at the beginning. The only thing that made it tolerable was that prosperity had attended him from the first. He had been what was termed "lucky" with his sheep. So far he had met with no disaster, and had generally contrived to sell his wool in the best market,

But the life of a squatter was a toilsome and anxious one at the best. Sometimes he would be in the saddle for eight or ten hours at a stretch, while in busy seasons he stood in with his hired labourers and worked from morning till night.

Then it was that the wide contrast between the old life and the new stabbed his heart with such bitter pain, and made the desire for revenge doubly strong within him. Prosperity for itself was nothing. Money was only a means to an end. To get back again to his native land was his one ambition. To feast his eyes upon "the hills of home," to hear the wind singing in the pines, to smell the fragrance of the apple orchard, and fling a line once more in the trout stream—that would be heaven in comparison with the life he was leading now.

"Ten years," he would say to himself; "ay, nearly eleven. How the time slips! I shall be an old man if ever I get back, and then very likely everything will have changed. I wonder if Briar Nook looks just as it used to do. I hope nobody has cut down the fir-trees in the lane, or altered the double hedge on which mother used to spread her clothes to dry, or meddled with the apple orchard, though most of the trees must be getting old now. Ah! Peter Trefusa, you stole it from us, and have been receiving the rent ever since. Eighty pounds a year for ten years, that's eight hundred pounds, to say nothing of interest; but if there's vengeance in the earth I'll be even with you yet."

So it came about that Abram lived two lives—one in the daylight and a very different one after nightfall.

"I'm happier suffering wrong than doing wrong," he would say to himself sometimes when all the world slept around him; "and it's foolish of me to think evil, for that's bound to grow into evil deeds in the long-run;" and he would fall asleep with a prayer upon his lips that he might

deal honestly with the bright-eyed lad that had been thrown upon his protection.

So the battle raged, and showed no signs of coming to an end. It was still uncertain what he would do if some day a letter came from Peter Trefusa asking him to deliver up one of the children.

The longer such an event was delayed, however, the more unlikely it seemed that he would do the right; the longer evil is looked at the less repulsive it becomes; the more it is dallied with, the more powerful it is.

Abram was conscious of this himself. When the idea first suggested itself to him, he trembled all over and tried to put it from him, and for weeks after, not only in the night-time but during the day, he fought the temptation with might and main; but it was not so now. It was only when the darkness appalled him and the silence made him afraid that he made the least effort to shake himself free from the temptation.

Moreover, the trend of every event seemed in the same direction. He felt in the clutches of an invisible power which he had no strength to resist. In spite of old Peter's letter, he felt sure that some day he would be called upon to decide this question that never ceased to haunt him, and in the daytime at least he had very little doubt as to the answer he would give.

So the days travelled on, and grew into months and years. Edie and Ned passed out of babyhood into boyhood, and no one told them that they were not brothers. In some respects they were singularly alike—both were tall for their age, both dark, with large liquid brown eyes, both were generous and affectionate almost to a fault. There, however, the likeness ended. Ned was daring, adventurous, loving the sunshine and all living things, and never so happy as when out of doors. Edie, on the other hand, was

retiring, quiet, and reflective, fond of books and toys, and manifesting more or less of an aversion for outdoor pursuits.

To please Ned, however, Edie would give up his indoor games, and go for long rambles with him across the hills, while at other times Ned would give up an excursion with Dan or his father that he might be company for his brother at home. This thoughtful kindness and unobtrusive generosity touched Abram greatly.

"I'm blest if I know who the boys take after," he said to Betty one day. "Neither Trefusa nor myself could ever be reckoned among the considerate sort, and as for their mothers—well, in the case of one of them, at any rate, there was not much evidence of generosity, and yet these boys will sacrifice anything for one another."

"I reckon they help each other to be kind," Betty said, looking with an air of pride at her protégés, who were walking arm in arm across the yard.

"They might be real brothers, they're so much alike," Abram remarked, after a pause.

"No, they're too much alike to be related," Betty answered, with an air of superior wisdom. "But it 'ud be a pity to undeceive them now."

"No one talks of undeceiving 'em, I hope," Abram answered quickly.

"Not that I knows of," was the reply. "For myself, I'd sooner bite my tongue out first."

"And I'm sure Dan would not think of doing it," Abram answered.

"Dan knows best himself what he'd do or what he won't do," was the somewhat oracular reply.

"You're always suspicious of Dan," Abram answered a little bit tartly. "I'm sure there's not a better servant in the whole colony."

"If you're pleased I've no right to grumble," Betty answered shortly, and walked back into the kitchen.

Abram looked after her for a moment, then smiled cynically to himself: "What curious cattle women are!" he muttered. "There's never any making them up. They get such curious notions into their heads, and for no reason in the world. Reason? Well, no. Reason ain't in their line. They don't reason. They just flop down, and when once they are stuck you can't budge 'em. Why Betty should take agin Dan is beyond comprehension. He's as handy about the house as a woman, and never takes anything as trouble. He helps her in a hundred ways, and the more he does for her the less she likes him. It beats me altogether." After which reflection Abram directed his thoughts into other channels.

A few minutes later something like a shriek rang out across the yard, followed by a cry from Ned.

"Oh, Dan, dad, Betty, anybody, come quick, or Edie 'll be killed!"

Abram cleared the yard almost at a bound, while Dan came rushing up from another direction.

"What is it, Ned?" Abram asked.

But the lad was almost too agitated to speak. Seizing his father's hand, he hurried him into one of the outhouses, closely followed by Dan.

For a moment the two men stood as if petrified. Crouching on the floor directly in front of them was Edie, almost black in the face, and with eyes starting out of his head. In his right hand he held a long, thin serpent, tightly clasped about the neck, but he had not the strength to strangle it out and out. Meanwhile the serpent had coiled itself round the lad's arm and neck, and was steadily gaining the mastery. Indeed, even now the little fellow's fingers were relaxing their hold, and the venomous creature

seemed to be gloating over its coming victory. Its mouth was wide open, its forked tongue darting quickly in and out, while its small eyes burned blood-red.

There was no time to ask how Edie got into such a position. The lad himself could not speak; in a few seconds more the horrid coils of the snake would strangle him to death.

"Grasp the boy's hand and squeeze," shouted Dan, "while I unloose its tail."

In another moment Abram's broad palm closed over Edie's small hand, while Dan loosened the hideous folds from the child's neck, and not a second too soon; indeed, he was almost afraid that help had come too late.

To crush the head of the venomous beast was now a small matter, and then they hurried with the little fellow into the open air. He quickly revived when the cool wind began to play upon his cheeks, and in a few minutes seemed little the worse for the adventure.

"Did I kill him, dad?" was his first question.

"We killed him between us, anyhow," Abram replied, with a glad light shining in his eyes.

"I didn't think he would—you know—turn all round quick—like that, you know"—with a motion of his hands—"but I held tight."

Abram gave a little shudder. The serpent was one of the deadliest of its kind, a fact that Edie did not fully comprehend, and so he was to a large extent unconscious of the danger he had escaped. But Abram, knowing how near the lad had been to death, having seen the tightening folds round his throat, and felt the smooth skin of the beast beneath his fingers, and caught the glare of its cruel eyes, had a feeling as though serpents were creeping all about the place. "I shall be dreaming about 'em to-night," he said to himself, and shuddered again.

"But I don't understand how it all comed about," said Dan. "What was he a-doin'?"

"Oh, we were playin' in the shed," Ned answered stoutly, "drivin' bullocks to fair, and I had a whip an' was slashin' everythin', an' I reckon I must have slashed the snake without knowin' it. Don't you think I did, Edie?"

"Yes, I think that was it, Ned."

"But when you saw the thing, why did you not run away?"

"Oh, I never saw'd it at all," said Ned, "till Edie was squeezin' it round the neck."

"But why did you touch it, Edie?" Abram asked. "Don't you know if it had bitten you, you would have died?"

"Yes, I know'd that," he answered quietly, "but, you see, I didn't want it to bite Ned."

"But I don't understand," Abram questioned, looking puzzled. "Was Ned in its way?"

"Ned was close to it, don't you know," the boy answered, with a smile, "and the snake sat up and stretched out its neck, but I was too quick for it. I just made a grab, and then it twisted about me."

"Then it was not going to dart at you?"

"Oh no, father. It was going to bite Ned in the neck, I reckon, just behind his ear."

Abram walked away two or three paces, feeling, as he expressed it afterwards, "as though someone was sending a trickle of cold water down his back."

"Oh, well," he said at length, "the thing is dead enough now, so we'd better try and forget all about it."

"But it was plucky of Edie—wasn't it, dad?" Ned questioned, looking proudly at his brother.

"Yes, it was very plucky of him, and you ought to be very grateful to him for saving your life," Abram answered.

"Oh, I be thankful," was the prompt reply, "an' I'm proud of Edie. You say he ain't noisy like me, but he's terrible strong."

"I ain't as strong as you, Ned," was the quiet reply. "I reckon you would have squeezed 'im dead."

"Or frightened his life out with hollerin'," Ned replied, with a laugh.

"It were a good job, any road, you did holler," chimed in Dan. "You brought yer father an' me in no time."

"Well, well, we've made a good finish of it, anyhow," Abram answered, and led the way into the house.

For the next month everyone on the ranch was on the look-out for snakes; for that very reason, perhaps, the venomous creatures kept out of sight, and no other adventure in the same line had to be chronicled.

The two lads, however, seemed drawn, if possible, more closely together than before. They felt, in a vague, undefined way, that they were some sort of protection for each other. Ned felt that, though Edie might be quiet and retiring, he was not lacking in courage; while, in Edie's eyes, Ned was a kind of undeveloped hero, who would do most wonderful things if he only had the chance.

Abram watched their growth and development with a curious feeling at his heart. There were times when Trefusa's son seemed quite as dear to him as his own, and when the thought of wronging one for the sake of the other was repugnant to every instinct of his nature. It was clear to him that his inward struggle was not ended yet; that the game to be played for securing his own involved considerations that could not be passed over lightly; and that, if the chance which he had been anticipating for years ever did come, his decision, whatever it might be, would not be without its alloy of pain.

It was only when memory and imagination came to his aid that he felt certain of his course of action if the chance should be given. Five minutes' contemplation of Peter Trefusa's conduct would set his heart on fire with hate, and quicken all his worst resolves into vigorous life.

CHAPTER V.

WAS IT FATE ?

“ Fate steals along with silent tread,
Found oftenest in what least we dread ;
Frowns in the storm with angry brow,
But in the sunshine strikes the blow.”

COWPER.

FOR many months after the circumstance recorded in the last chapter, Abram Fowey quietly waited on events. That sooner or later his chance would come he never doubted. Old Trefusa might hold out almost to the last, but that he would die leaving Edward's child unprovided for, Abram could not bring himself to believe. He would be hearing some day that the Pendormic estates were equally divided between the two grandsons, and then would come his opportunity.

His opportunity, however, came sooner than he had anticipated, and not quite in the way he had expected. Moreover, it was preceded by an event which shook his nerves considerably, though it provided him with an excuse that seemed on the whole exceedingly opportune.

The rainy season had come in suddenly that year, and much sooner than usual. From morning till night the skies hung low and leaden, and the dismal rain poured down unceasingly. Across the dreary uplands the cold, wet wind

moaned and complained as though it had all the woes of the world to express, and the sheep-tracks in the valleys became impassable quagmires.

The creek, usually a mere dribble of water, that threatened in the dry season to fail altogether, quickly grew into an angry, brawling torrent that swept everything before it, and proved the destruction of more than one adventurous beast that essayed to cross. Outdoor work was practically suspended until the skies should cease their weeping, and the sun break through the clouds once more.

Abram Fowey felt acutely the depressing influence of the weather, and had more time for reflection than was good for him. For the last year or two the seasons had been somewhat against him, and though he had held his own, he had laid little or nothing by. Hence his dissatisfaction with the world generally was more pronounced than usual.

While he was kept busy he was not unhappy. But to sit under the veranda all the day, and watch the dismal rain sweeping past, was, he declared, enough to give any man the blues; and if he was ready to bite his finger-ends off, who could wonder?

He found some solace in his pipe, it is true, and sometimes the merry laughter of the boys made him forget himself for a moment or two; but in the main he writhed under his own thoughts, and fancied himself the most ill-used man under heaven.

There was no denying, of course, that Goolong Creek was not an exhilarating place in rainy weather. The country was not lovely in the brightest sunshine; but when the landscape was shrouded with mist, and all the fields were sodden with rain; when the leaves hung limp and brown upon the trees, and the scrub was almost destitute of colour; when the roads were an endless series of puddles, and the creek roared with irritating monotony—why, then Abram

Fowey's ranch was about as unlovely and uninviting as a place could be.

"It's a God-forsaken country this," Abram grumbled, as he sat under the veranda on the lee-side of the house and pulled vigorously at his pipe, "and I believe I hate it more now than at the beginning. But there! what's the use of growling? I shall have to stay here, I suppose, till something better turns up. I've endured more than twenty years of it. Good Lord! how the time flies! More than twenty years—all the best of a man's life. Cheated by that old scoundrel, Trefusa! God in heaven! I wonder if ever I shall be quits with him?" And he knocked the ashes from his pipe with unnecessary vigour, then pulled his pouch from his pocket and began to refill it.

The rain kept sweeping past with the same steady persistency; across the road the creek hissed and roared and gathered strength and volume with every passing hour; the tall gum-trees that shaded the end of the house drooped their gray leaves in the pelting rain, and looked, with the long strips of bark hanging down their trunks, pictures of utter dejection; the wet wind wailed dolefully round the corners of the house.

Abram lit his pipe and rose to his feet. "I think I'll go into the house and have a game with the boys," he muttered to himself. "Bless 'em! they're the only cheerful things about the place, and I ought to be thankful for 'em. They're some bit of compensation for all I've had to endure." And he leaned against one of the posts that supported the veranda, and looked away across the creek to the great stretch of lonely Bush beyond. He did not notice the sodden, cloud-swept landscape, however; his thoughts had taken a sudden turn back into the past.

"For the lad's sake I ought to think kindly of her," he said to himself at length. "No better boy was ever born.

He's courage, too, and there ain't no viciousness about him. Strange she could leave her own flesh and blood in that way. I suppose she never cared for me. But the bairn! The bairn! Ah, well, I'm glad he don't take after her."

For another five minutes he smoked on in an abstracted fashion. He had evidently forgotten the rain, and did not hear the roaring creek. From thinking of the past his thoughts ran on into the future.

"This ain't the kind of place to bring lads up in," he reflected; "and if my boy is ever to be the Squire of Pendormie he ought to have a decent education. It would be odd, though, if I should train up my own lad to look down upon me. Perhaps, if he gets to be squire, he won't even notice me. I don't think that, though. There's no meanness about him. No; he's a generous boy—they both are. And I shall get back in the end, perhaps, to Briar Nook."

At this point of his reflections Abram changed his position and struck another match. There was no abatement of the rain, and the creek seemed to be roaring louder than ever.

"I shall have all the bridges washed away if it keeps on at this rate," he said at length. "I've known it rain longer, but I think I never remember it come down so furiously. But—hello! what's that?"

And he went to the edge of the balcony and looked toward the upper reaches of the creek.

"It sounded strangely like the shriek of a woman," he muttered to himself, with an uneasy look in his eyes. "But no woman would be out in weather like this. Besides, women never do come this way, or rarely ever. God! it is one, though——"

And with a cry of "Dan! Everybody! Quick!" he rushed down the bank of the creek. A white face gleamed for a moment above the surging waters and disappeared.

Then a hand was reached out imploringly farther down the torrent.

Abram ran at a speed he never before attained, while behind came Dan, followed at a long distance by the two boys. A few hundred yards down, the creek took a sudden bend, and the angry waters spun round in a miniature whirlpool. It was to this spot Abram directed his steps. Across the outlet of the "pool" a wooden paling had been thrown to keep the cattle in the dry season from straying beyond the farm boundaries. The paling was supported by a plank that served as a footbridge when the creek was full. At present the plank was almost close to the water. For a moment Abram stood on this narrow bridge, then lay flat, face downwards, and clutched at something. The next instant Dan came up.

"Tell the boys to go home," he cried, "and then come here!"

Dan obeyed instantly. He was in the habit of obeying without asking for a reason why. Together they lifted the woman out, bruised, dripping, and apparently dead. Her loosened hair hung over her face, almost hiding her features. Neither man stopped to inquire who she might be; it was a question that scarcely occurred to them. To resuscitate her was their only concern, and to this task they bent themselves with a will.

For several minutes not a word was spoken. Then Abram shifted his position, and the woman's face came directly into his line of vision. For a moment he paused, as though arrested by some sudden surprise; then he hurriedly swept the tangled hair from the woman's face, and as he did so a groan escaped his lips.

Dan looked up with a start, and saw his master's face drawn, contorted, and deadly pale.

"Are you ill, master?" he asked.

Abram started.

"Ill, did you ask? No—no. Look at that face, Dan. Do you recognise her?" he gasped, his breath coming and going in short, sharp spasms.

"No, master, I don't," Dan said after a pause; "and yet she's like—like——"

"Like who?"

"Why, like her who went away."

"It *is* her, Dan; I'm certain of it! Ten years have changed her terribly, but I should know her among a thousand!"

Dan said no more, but redoubled his efforts to restore animation. After what seemed an interminable period, the still heart began to flutter, and the breath came in feeble gasps. By this time the other servants were on the scene, and the unconscious woman was quickly carried into the house.

"Keep the boys out of the way," Abram said to Betty. "Let 'em go into the barn, or anywhere they like."

The woman was quietly breathing when Abram and Betty lifted her into bed, and applied such restoratives as were within their reach. Abram moved about like a man in a dream, and more than once pinched himself to make sure that he was awake.

He did not attempt to analyze his feelings; had he done so he would have discovered that they were of a very mixed character. While Betty was trying to force some stimulant between the pallid lips he stood a little apart, scanning eagerly the features that once set his heart throbbing in a strange tumult of passion.

Ten years had changed her greatly, but she was a good-looking woman still. The features were good and gracefully rounded. The hair was abundant and glossy as a raven's wing. Yet he felt no wish to take her to his heart, no

desire to press a kiss upon her lips. The fire of his earlier passion had burnt itself out, and left only dead ashes in its place. It seemed strange to him now to recall those days of their early wedded life. How proud he was when he brought her to Goolong Creek, a happy, trusting bride! Was it love for her he felt in those days or merely a passing fancy for a pretty face? He fancied he loved her. He tried to be a good husband. He would have been faithful to her to the last.

But ten long and lonely years had wrought a revolution. He hardly felt certain of his identity. He was the same man outwardly, but inwardly he was different.

The rain had given over almost suddenly, and between rifts in the clouds the sun came through. A band of light lay across the bed, and washed the woman's raven hair with gold. It touched her cheeks at length, and the faintest shade of colour began to show through her pallid skin. Her lips after awhile became faintly red.

Betty still continued her exertions, and half an hour later the woman opened her eyes and looked round her. First on Betty's face, then on her husband's, then on different objects in the room, but it was evident she recognised nothing.

Abram came a little closer to the bed, and looked at the white hand that lay upon the coverlet. It was the left hand, and her wedding-ring still encircled her finger. He did not, however, attempt to touch it, though the sight of that little circle of gold moved him for a moment as nothing else had done. It stirred so many memories in his brain, and made all the past live before him once more.

After awhile she opened her eyes again, and looked long and steadfastly into Abram's face. And as she did so a light of recognition began to steal over her countenance.

"You are my husband," she said at length, in a whisper

so faint that, but for the movement of her lips, he would not have known what she said.

"I was once," he answered.

"You are still," she gasped feebly. "I've kept myself honest and respectable."

"Then why have you come back?"

"I wanted to see my boy."

"You had no wish to see me?"

"I do not know. I've thought better of you of late. You were always kind. But my child, where is he?"

"Do you think you deserve to see the lad?" Abram asked bitterly. "A woman who could run away from her own baby and never even inquire after him for ten long years is deserving of no consideration."

"Don't scold me," she said; "I know I'm dying. Please let me see my boy before I go."

"You are not dying," Abram answered sternly. "You are getting better. But you would have been dead had I not fished you out."

"The bridge gave way under me," she said with a little shudder. "But, please, let me see my boy, or it will be too late."

"Go and fetch him, Betty," Abram said sternly. "It will do her no harm, though she won't recognise him."

"I know I don't deserve it," she gasped feebly, "though I came on purpose to see him."

"And did you expect to stay here?" Abram questioned.

"I—I——" Then the voice died away into silence, and all the light vanished from the eyes.

Abram caught up the glass of brandy-and-water that stood on the table, and began to moisten her lips with it.

"She's more hurt than I thought," he muttered to himself. "I shall be glad when the doctor comes."

In a few minutes consciousness returned again, and

glancing swiftly round the room, she asked feebly : " Has he come ?"

" Betty has gone to fetch him," he answered. " He will be here in a minute."

A minute or two later Betty came into the room alone.

" Where is my boy ?" the dying woman gasped.

" They're both gone out to the bluff with Joey to look after the sheep," Betty answered. " The rain's cleared off, and they were glad to go for a run."

" The bluff ?" she questioned. " That's a long way, isn't it ?"

" Three miles or so," Abram answered.

" It's God's punishment," was the feeble reply. " I shall never see him."

" Oh yes, you will," Betty answered cheerfully. " They'll be back in two hours at the outside."

But even while she spoke the woman had fainted again.

The next hour was a trying time for each of them. During every lucid moment the dying woman cried out for her child, while her distress at his non-arrival was pitiful to see.

Twenty times at least Abram went to the door and strained his eyes across the Bush, but the lads were nowhere visible. They had been kept in the house so many days by the incessant rain that they were only too pleased now to make the most of their liberty.

" It is God's punishment," the woman wailed, while the spark of life waned more and more.

Abram and Betty did their best to fan the expiring flame, but all their efforts proved in vain.

With a last despairing effort she cried out : " Oh for one look into my baby's eyes !"

But it was not to be. Almost before the words were uttered her head fell back. The light faded from her eyes,

and upon her lips lay that white seal which cannot be mistaken.

"It's all over," Abram said, with a little gasp.

"Ay, poor soul, she's gone to her account," Betty replied, with her eyes still fixed upon the woman's face.

"We'd better say nothing of this to the boys, Betty."

"As you will."

"I mean, we'd better say nothing about—about—who she is."

"Perhaps it 'ud be best they shouldn't know."

"It could do 'em no good."

"That's so."

Abram hesitated for a moment, as though he wanted to say something more, then turned suddenly and walked out of the room.

In the yard he met Dan.

"Have you seen the boys anywhere?" he asked carelessly.

"Not since they went away with Joey."

"The young dogs 'll be up to their knees in mud."

"They won't mind that; they're tired o' bein' indoors. But 'ow's the lady comin' on?"

"She's dead, Dan;" and Abram dropped his eyes suddenly to the ground.

"Dead, master?"

"Ay, she's gone, and, under the circumstances, you'd better not tell the lads who she was. Nobody knows but you and Betty, and no good could come of their knowing."

Dan's small eyes contracted, and for several seconds he scanned Abram's face closely.

"It's a strange home-coming," Abram went on, with his eyes still fixed upon the ground. "A strange home-coming. You remember her going away, Dan?"

"Ay, sir; as well as if 'twere yesterday."

"Ten years is a big slice out of a man's life," Abram said musingly. "She wanted to see her boy, she said, but it wer'n't to be. Ten years! And then her mother-heart waking up. I don't understand it."

"It's very funny," Dan remarked. "Five minutes earlier or later might ha' made all th' difference."

Abram lifted his eyes, and they went wandering out over the distant Bush. His face wore a troubled look.

"It looks like fate," he said, after a long pause; then he turned and walked back into the house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRUIT RIPENS.

“Nothing dies, nothing can die.
No idlest word thou speakest,
But is a seed cast into time,
And grows through all eternity.”
CARLYLE.

A WEEK after the events recorded in the last chapter a letter was received by Abram from a firm of Cornish solicitors, which brought to a crisis the battle he had been waging with himself for the past ten years. As soon as he saw the address, “A. Foy, Esq.,” he felt instinctively that his opportunity had come.

He did not open the letter until he got to his own room, and knew he was free from observation. It was a long epistle, written on blue foolscap, with a wide margin ruled off with red ink. It reminded him of a letter his father had received more than twenty years before, which proved to be the death-knell of all their hopes and dreams. Was this, he wondered, to announce their resurrection?

He was almost afraid to read. Hope had been deferred so long that he felt that another disappointment would unnerve him completely. With the first sentence, however, he gave a little gasp of relief.

Tom Trefusa was dead; also his son. Drowned by the capsizing of a yacht. Among his private papers two letters were found, containing the information that his brother

Edward had died in Australia, but had left a son in the care of Mr. A. Foy, of Goolong Creek. On referring to the dates, it was discovered that these letters were written more than ten years previously. Why these letters were sent to Mr. Thomas Trefusa, and not to his father, was not known. Why, moreover, Mr. Thomas Trefusa had kept the information to himself was a question interesting in itself, but not necessarily germane to the present inquiry. What was of importance was to prove or disprove the genuineness and authenticity of the letters in question. Mr. Peter Trefusa naturally felt very anxious about the matter, for at present he was without an heir. As his solicitors, they (Messrs. Whittle and Carve) had been commissioned to make the fullest investigation, and in that investigation this letter was the first step.

Such was the substance of the letter, which occupied two closely-written pages of foolscap.

Abram read the letter twice very carefully, then sat with knitted brows and hands deep in his pockets. Was this also fate? It certainly looked like it. Everything was playing into his hands, and without any effort of his own. It was true events had taken a long time to ripen; but at last the fruit was ready to fall, and into his own lap.

Twenty years ago Peter Trefusa, by the aid of a legal fraud, had stolen the little freehold which he and his father had toiled so hard to win. Now was his chance of getting it back again, and getting it back with compound interest. It really seemed that the world was ruled in justice after all, and he would be a fool and worse if he did not seize this opportunity of getting back his own.

He would have to act, however, with great caution. His secret was shared by two others—Dan and Betty—and unless he could succeed in hoodwinking them, the Fates would work in vain.

"I have it!" he said at length, starting to his feet. "Yes, I must do that. I've a good excuse, too. Things couldn't have happened better. But I'll say nothing for a day or two—at least, nothing definite. I'll throw out a hint now and then, just to prepare the way; after what's happened they'll not be surprised." And he thrust the letter into his pocket and walked out of the room.

Two days after Dan said to Betty: "I shouldn't be surprised if the governor were to jack up this shop."

"I wish he would," said Betty shortly, "for I'm fair sick of it."

"I shouldn't be sorry for a change myself," Dan answered, "though I've nowt to complain of here."

"I should think not," said Betty; "you've had your own way in near everything."

"I'm not complaining," Dan replied, his small eyes contracting. "But I can see that the governor ain't quite satisfied wi' things."

"He's been terribly upset, poor man!" said Betty. "Think of that woman coming here an' drowning herself afore his very face, as it were!"

"She didn't do it on purpose," said Dan.

"How d' you know?" Betty snapped. "There's never any knowin' what sich women will do. She might ha' thought she'd win his sympathy by gettin' wet, but the creek were deeper than she thought. Oh, sich folks are amazin' deep; but she overdid it, and sarved her right, too! But it's upset the master terrible. I've been expecting to see her ghost walkin' about, an' so, I tell you, I shan't be sorry to clear out."

"But what would you do?" queried Dan.

"That's my business," Betty answered curtly. "But I can tell you I ain't penniless, and I've a sister living in Melbourne as wants company."

"Anyhow, we shall see what we shall see," Dan replied oracularly, and walked away.

A day or two later Dan returned to the subject again.

"I'm prepared to wager my last year's wages, Betty," he said, "that the gov'nor 'll give up."

"Why, has he been sayin' something?" Betty asked with evident curiosity.

"He don't say much," said Dan, "but he keeps hinting things. Have any more letters come lately?"

"It seems to me," said Betty, with a toss of her head, "that his letters ain't no business of yours."

"Of course they ain't," Dan answered mildly. "I was only wondering if there was any outside things as was a troubling him."

"If there was, he wouldn't be likely to tell you," was the reply, and she turned abruptly on her heel and left him.

On the following day, however, she opened the conversation with Dan herself.

"I believe you are going to be right for once," she said. "The master's been talking to me this morning."

"Indeed!" And Dan's small eyes twinkled.

"He says he can't settle to nothing; that her white face haunts him everywhere, and that he's almost made up his mind to leave Goolong Creek for good and all."

"Where will he go to?"

"Don't know. He says it's time the boys went to a proper school; that there's no chance for 'em to learn much in a place like this. Besides, he says there ain't nothin' to be got out of farmin'."

"It appears, Betty, our days are numbered," Dan said after a pause. "So we'll have to make the best of our time."

That same afternoon Abram took the lads into his con-

fidence. He was walking with them out over the hills, one of each side of him.

"It's coming winter again, boys," he said, looking off upon the yellowing landscape, "and I'm getting tired of this lonely country."

"Tired of it, father?" Ned questioned, his bright eyes glowing with interest.

"Ay, Ned. It's all right to you, no doubt; you were born here, and have never known anything different; but I have always been hankering for something better."

Edie came a step nearer, and looked wonderingly into his father's face, but he did not speak.

"But if you went away from Goolong Creek, where would you go?" Ned asked. And Edie's dark, thoughtful eyes echoed the inquiry.

"To Melbourne, perhaps."

"To Melbourne! Oh, that would be glorious! There are thousands of things to be seen in Melbourne, ain't there?"

"Ay, Ned. There's life and bustle there. But I'm not quite sure you would like it. It's noisy, and busy, and restless."

"Oh, I think it would be fine," Ned said, with enthusiasm. "I want to shout here sometimes to make more noise."

"But what does father's quiet lad think?" Abram asked, turning affectionate eyes towards Edie.

"Oh, I think I should like it very much," the boy replied; "there's such lots of books and pictures, and engines and all that, in Melbourne, ain't there?"

"Ay, books by the waggon-load," Abram replied.

"I should like to have as many books as I could read," the boy answered.

"Well, you shall some day," Abram said. "It's time you began to learn things in right good earnest."

"I don't care about learning things," said Ned. "I'd rather be doing something."

"Well, learning is doing something," Edie replied, with a smile; "reading a book is doing something, ain't it?"

"Oh no, Edie, you're all wrong," Ned replied, in a tone of superior wisdom. "Building a house is doing something, or making a bridge; but reading—why, that's just doing nothing."

Abram looked from one to the other and smiled—a smile albeit that was not without a touch of pain in it. He felt for the moment that he would be perhaps a happier man if he could keep the lads with him always. A man's life, after all, was not in his possessions. He might plot, and plan, and manœuvre, and cheat old Peter Trefusa, and get a cheap revenge. And what then? Would he be the happier? A hundred years from now, what would it matter who possessed the Pendormic estates? If he could live his life honourably, though in exile, would it not be better?

His thoughts were broken in upon by a question from Ned.

"If we go away from here, dad, will Betty and Dan go with us?"

"No, I think not," was the reply. "Betty says she's getting old, and wants a rest; and Dan, of course, would have to get another place."

"Don't you think they would be very sorry?" Edie questioned.

"Yes, for some things; but there's always sorrow mixed up somehow with what we do."

"How is that?" Edie asked, with a questioning light in his eyes.

"Ah, my boy, I cannot tell you," Abram answered seriously. "But nobody escapes, somehow."

"Do people have sorrow if they always do the right, father?" Edie questioned.

"Ay, lad, they seem to have more sometimes than other folk."

"But Betty says folks who do right always come out best at the finish," Ned answered, in his light-hearted fashion.

"Did Betty say that?"

"Ay, she said that that woman wouldn't have got drowned in the Creek if she hadn't done wrong. But I don't see how that can be."

"Betty doesn't know everything," Abram answered thoughtfully.

"But she knows a goodish deal, father," Edie said. "You see, she reads the Bible a lot."

"It's a pity what she reads doesn't sweeten her temper," Abram replied.

"Oh, but Betty is a good sort at bottom," said Ned, "and I hope she'll go with us when we leave here."

"Shall we go away soon, father?" Edie questioned.

"Ay, lads. Now that I find you are both willing to go, the sooner we get away the better."

"Oh, won't it be glorious!" said Ned, clapping his hands. "I say, Edie, let's have a race. I'm bound to let off steam somehow."

Abram watched the boys scampering across the field with a pathetic look in his eyes. He loved his own boy so much that he felt it would be terribly hard to give him up even to inherit a fortune, while Trefusa's boy lay so near his heart that the thought of cheating him out of his rights made him wince.

"There's trouble for me whichever course I take," he muttered to himself. "And the thing I've longed for, and anticipated for years, ain't nearly so attractive now that it's within my reach. However, I'm bound to go on now; I can't stand still if I would."

On the following day a wealthy squatter, who had long

cast envious eyes upon Abram Fowey's ranch, took the whole thing off his hands, and within a fortnight Abram and his two boys were journeying across the Bush toward the great city.

It cost Abram a keener pang than he thought to leave the place in which he had dwelt so long. For more than twenty years he had toiled and hoped in Goolong Creek, and though he had often cursed it in his heart, and called it a God-forsaken country, yet now, when he came to say good-bye—to look his last upon those hills and fields—he felt as though he were leaving a part of his heart behind him.

Ned was boisterous as usual, and full of the most delightful anticipation. Edie was quietly happy. Betty, to hide her grief and keep her tears from flowing, was snapping at everything and everybody. But the inevitable moment came at length, and then Betty broke down completely, and ran away and hid herself. To lose her boys, she felt, was worse than losing life, though Ned's cheery word at parting comforted her a little.

"Never mind, Betty, you'll be coming to see us soon," he said; and then he waved his hat, and the waggon drove away.

Betty and Dan were remaining awhile under the new owner, but neither expected to stay very long. Goolong Creek could never be the same to them again.

Abram spent a week in Melbourne to show the boys the sights of the place, and then started for Sydney. While the eyes of Betty and Dan were upon him, or while there was a chance of being followed by them, he knew he could not safely carry out his purpose. If possible, he must destroy the trail, so that they would not be able to trace him; when that was done he would feel safe. In Sydney his secret was absolutely his own; at least, he imagined so, and prepared his plans accordingly.

Taking a small cottage on the outskirts of the town, he furnished it cheaply, and was fortunate in securing a second edition of Betty to preside over its destinies. When he had got comfortably settled, he wrote a reply to the letter of Messrs. Whittle and Carve, in which he stated that the son of the late Edward Trefusa was still in his charge, that the documents necessary to prove his identity were also in his possession, and that he would be glad to receive instructions as to his future custody.

When the letter had been sent away, he felt that it was time to look after himself. He was not so well off that he could afford to spend the rest of his days in idleness. Neither was he so poor as to feel anxious about the future. Still, it was necessary that he should do something. One of the lads, at any rate, would have to be educated at his own expense, and if his hope of returning to the old country in an independent position was ever realized, he would have to add considerably to his store.

After he had fixed upon a school for the boys, he began to look round the town in the hope of finding some suitable employment. During the first week he felt considerably discouraged. He saw at a glance that he was altogether too slow and cautious. His country habits were not at all fitted for city methods. While he was thinking about a thing, somebody else went and did it.

Moreover, he became acutely conscious that there were very few things he could do. He had worked on a farm all his life. Hence, in the heart of a busy town, he felt like a fish out of water. There was plenty to do; people were busy on every hand; but, unfortunately, there was nothing for him.

It is not in the nature of a Cornishman, however, to acknowledge himself defeated. He may be painfully conscious of the difficulties of his position, may see as clearly

as anyone his own deficiencies ; but he is by no means blind to his own abilities, while he has a deeply-rooted conviction that if any other man can succeed, a Cornishman has no right to fail.

During the second week his courage rose several degrees. He began to feel more at home. The noise and rattle of the streets ceased to jar upon his nerves. He seemed to catch the swing of the place, and walked with quicker step. He began to see, too, beneath the surface of things, and fancied he discovered openings in several directions where a living might be made.

By the end of the third week, as he told his boys, he had sealed his fate. A small fruit and vegetable store having become empty, he took it, believing that what he did not know he could learn, and that what he did know would stand him in very good stead.

For the first month or two he did not earn his salt, but he felt, nevertheless, that he was gaining experience, and he argued logically enough that if experience was worth anything at all, it was worth paying for. So day after day he plodded on with a courage that never failed him, and a hope that kept its lamp always trimmed and brightly burning.

By the end of the fourth month he thought he had turned the corner, and when six months had passed away he was quite certain that he was in the way of making a respectable living. During all this time he had thought as little as possible about the coming separation. Now and then the old question would haunt him, and occasionally he would swing like a pendulum from point to point for a brief space—now vowing that he would be even with old Trefusa, though it cost him his soul, and now declaring that he had committed himself to nothing, and that he was simply waiting to see which way the wind would blow. But, as a rule,

these periods were of very short duration. The pendulum would quietly settle itself back in the old place, and his purpose would lie before him clear as the day.

One evening, on arriving home from his store, he found a letter with a Melbourne post-mark, and on opening it discovered that it was from Mr. John Carve, of the firm of Whittle and Carve. Mr. Carve had been commissioned by his client, Mr. Peter Trefusa, to come out to Australia to investigate the claims of the reputed son of Edward Trefusa, and hoped to call on Mr. Foy in the course of a few days.

Abram sat down on the nearest chair and breathed hard. He had been expecting some such communication for days past, yet now when it was actually to hand it quite unnerved him. He dreaded telling the boys the secret that had been hidden from them so long; dreaded having to part the lads, who were more than brothers to each other; dreaded the pain of separation on his own account, and, more than all, dreaded taking that final and irrevocable step which he had contemplated so long, and which in prospect had given him so much satisfaction.

"I'm a contradictory fool," he said to himself, thrusting the letter into his pocket and getting up and walking into the street. "A stupid, contradictory fool; but, by Heaven, I'll not be a coward also!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIE CAST.

“ On reason build Resolve !
That column of true majesty in man.”

YOUNG.

DURING the next two or three days Abram fortified himself with constant doses of memory. In no other way could he keep his courage up to the sticking-point. He felt very angry that the old questions of right and wrong still haunted him. He was not a religious man, nor even a church-goer, and yet that troublesome something that men called conscience was as wakeful and as sensitive as it had ever been. He often wished it might be rooted out like a decayed tooth and thrown away. It seemed positively silly that he should worry over a matter that he had settled years before, and in the execution of which he had shaped all his plans.

It was only by allowing his memory to stray back over the past, and by conjuring up those scenes that had become glorified by the mists of years, that he could reach a suitable and, what he deemed, a rational state of mind. Hence, whenever conscience began to trouble him, he would close his eyes and try to dream of that home he had lost so long.

In most instances the effect was almost magical. His hands would clench involuntarily, his bosom would surge

and swell with anger, and he would find himself muttering, "Ah, Peter Trefusa, my time has come at length, and nothing shall cheat me out of my revenge."

But when the lads were at home from school, and the house was full of the music of their laughter and the sunshine of their presence, other thoughts possessed him, and memory sometimes refused to do his bidding. Occasionally he regretted writing to Trefusa at all, regretted leaving Goolong Creek. The boys were so happy together, that it seemed a pity to separate them. Moreover, he loved them both so truly and genuinely that, whichever lad accompanied Mr. Carve to England, a gap would be made in his heart and in his life that time would never fill.

Yet every hour brought the inevitable perceptibly nearer. Shrink from it as he might, there was no escape. The boys must be told the truth or a part of the truth, and by him. The fatal step could no longer be delayed.

It seemed the very irony of Fate that what he had anticipated for so many years with so much satisfaction should be so painful in the realization. Was life always so? he wondered. Was there never a rose without a thorn? Was the fruit but the mockery of the flower?

The laughter of the boys in the evenings made him gloomy and despondent. Their very joyousness made him sad. He began to feel that old Peter had scored again. Not content with robbing him of his farm, he was now going to steal from him his lad, and for the moment, at least, the second robbery seemed more cruel than the first.

Two evenings after the receipt of Mr. Carve's letter he returned with a telegram in his pocket. The lawyer would call on the following morning, "when he hoped Mr. Foy would find it convenient to receive him."

Abram loitered homeward through the streets like a man who had received news of some overwhelming calamity.

He felt as though his courage were oozing away through every pore. He almost dreaded meeting the boys and breaking to them the fatal secret.

The lads were boisterously happy that evening. They had been having a good time in the school grounds before returning home, and the excitement still lingered in their hearts and lighted up their eyes.

Abram sat in his easy-chair moody and silent, now and then darting furtive glances at them out of the corner of his eye. He was not a little proud of his lads. They had never given him a day's anxiety since they were born. They had been a source of unspeakable comfort, and an involuntary sigh escaped his lips. He wished now that he could keep them with him always.

"It's funny I should like a Trefusa," he said to himself. "They've not been a likeable lot as a whole. Ned was the best of 'em, by all accounts, but he was no better than he should be. It's a wonder his boy don't take more after him. But there's time enough yet—ay, time enough yet." And he took up his pipe and began to fill it.

"But blood's thicker than water," he went on, with the top of his finger in the half-filled bowl of his pipe. "And tendencies begin to leak out pretty early on, though, of course, nature plays freaks now and then. And, by Jove! a Fowey will be able to do the honours of Pendormic as well as a Trefusa, and it's only natural that I should think first of my own. But I wish the business was over."

Silence settled down upon the room after awhile. The lads got out their school-books and began diligently to con their lessons. Abram lighted his pipe, and through half-closed eyes saw pictures and faces in the blue wreaths of smoke that curled upward from the bowl.

His reverie was broken by the voice of Edie: "Dad, what's inverse ratio?"

"Inverse ratio? I'm blessed if I know, my boy; we had no sums of that sort when I was at school."

"And I wish we had none of 'em now," said Ned, pushing his book from him.

"What! tired of school already?" Abram asked.

"Oh no. I like school all right," Ned answered. "It's the lessons at home that bother me."

"Oh, I like 'em both," said Edie. "I think it's great fun finding out things you don't know."

"It's greater fun *doing* things," was the reply.

"Just like you, Ned," Edie replied; "you always want to be on the go."

"I know it, Edie," Ned answered with a laugh. "My blood runs quicker 'n yours, somehow. It ain't in me to stick to books like you do."

Abram pulled away at his pipe, but took no further part in the conversation. He was debating with himself how best to break the news. He felt that it was foolish to keep the secret any longer. Mr. Carve would be at the house on the following morning, and it was only right that they should all be prepared for his advent.

And yet he hesitated. It was not that he had not made up his mind what to do. He had settled that matter years before. He had shaped his plans with one fixed end in view. He had fought himself with desperate energy, and had conquered: no, blood was thicker than water. He cared for Trefusa's lad, but he cared more for his own. Moreover, revenge was sweet. He had suffered wrong for more than twenty years, and now that his opportunity had come he would be a thousand times worse than a fool not to embrace it.

Once or twice he pulled his pipe out of his mouth, and made as though he would speak to the lads, then slowly replaced his pipe again.

"They'll fret all the night if I tell 'em," he said to himself, at length. "And p'raps it'll be the last night they'll ever spend together. It's a pity to spoil it for 'em, and yet it's quite time they were told."

Then Edie's voice broke the silence again. "I wish Betty was here," he said.

Abram took his pipe out of his mouth, and looked at the boy, while Ned turned abruptly and asked why.

"Why! 'Cause she'd help me with my Scripture lesson," was the reply. "Betty knew Scripture like anything."

"Is it something specially puzzling, my boy?" Abram asked affectionately.

"Ay, dad," the boy answered, raising his large, thoughtful eyes. "This is the verse, 'He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.' Can you make out what it means?"

"I'm afraid it's beyond me," Abram said, after a long pause. "Anyhow, I don't think I can make any proper fist at explaining it."

"But it don't make any sense," chimed in Ned; "I should skip it if I were you, Edie. Teacher won't ask you anything 'bout it."

"But I want to know for myself," Edie replied.

"But what's the good of it?" broke in Ned. "You wouldn't be no better if you did know."

"I might be," was the answer. "But if dad don't know, I reckon I may as well give it up."

Abram looked across the room and smiled, but he did not reply. A pathetic smile it was that lighted up his face and lingered in his eyes. So pathetic, indeed, that Edie started from his chair and came towards him.

"Ain't you very well, dad?" he said, throwing his arms round Abram's neck, and kissing him.

"Ay, my laddie, I'm all right," Abram said tenderly,

and a sudden mist came up before his eyes, and blotted out everything.

"But you've been very quiet to-night," Edie replied.

"He's been busy thinking," called Ned, from the other side of the room—"ain't it so, dad?"

"Very likely I have," was the reply. "One has to think sometimes."

"But it's a great nuisance, all the same," said Ned.

"What do you say to a game of snap, for a change?"

"Oh yes, that'll waken us up a bit," Edie replied.

"As you will," said Abram. And a few minutes later the noisy game was in full swing, during which Abram lost heavily.

So the evening wore away, and the fatal secret was not told. "I'll not spoil their last evening together," was Abram's final decision, and so the boys were allowed to go to bed in blissful ignorance of what the next day was destined to bring forth.

When the house had grown quite still, Abram sat for a long time staring with knitted brows into the empty fireplace. Suddenly he started up with clenched hands, and began to pace up and down the room.

"Life ain't worth the price," he said to himself savagely. "It's quite true what the boy was reading—'He that findeth his life shall lose it.' We struggle, and sin, and scheme, for a certain thing, and if we get it we miss it. Good Lord, if there were no such place as Pendormic, and no such devil as Trefusa, I could be happy enough! There ain't two better lads in the world, and yet for the sake of a few thousand acres of land on the other side of the globe they must both be made miserable, and myself into the bargain! But there, what a fool I am! The thing has to be, and I've got to face it—ay, and face it in the interests of my own lad, and see that the Foweyes get back their own,

and with compound interest, too!" And he sat down in his chair again with a jerk, and filled his pipe once more.

It was after midnight when he retired to his own room; and when he came downstairs next morning, his step was listless, and he had dark rings under his eyes. He had been dosing himself with heavy draughts of memory during the night, with the result that sleep had been banished almost entirely.

He greeted his lads more affectionately than usual, and then proceeded with his breakfast in silence.

Edie and Ned both saw at a glance that something was troubling him, though they little guessed what was coming.

He looked up at length, and both lads laid down their knives and forks simultaneously. They felt instinctively, lads though they were, that he had something important to say.

For a moment Abram looked at them in silence; then he dropped his eyes, as though he could not bear their honest, steadfast gaze.

"I've something to say to you, lads," he said at length, without looking up—"something that I ought to have told you, perhaps, years ago. But it was a matter that could keep, and there was also a chance that you never need be told at all. However, things have altered now, and the truth has to come out. You will be very much surprised, I know; but—but—well, there's no help for it."

Neither of the boys replied, and Abram fidgeted with his fork, as if unable to decide how best to proceed.

"You see, it's this way," he went on, as though struggling mightily with himself. "You've both grown up with the notion that you were brothers. Ain't that so?"

"And ain't we brothers?" Ned asked quickly, while Edie's large eyes flashed the same inquiry.

"Well, that is just what you aren't," Abram said with a

gasp. And then he drew a long breath, as though he felt relieved that the secret was out.

For several moments there was silence in the room. Then Ned gave a prolonged whistle, while Edie stared at his father as though unable to credit his senses.

"I knew you would be terribly surprised," Abram said at length; "and if things went on as they did at the beginning, the chances are you'd never have been told at all. However, things have worked round the other way, and so you've got to know."

"Then, one of us ain't your boy?" Edie asked, with a tremulous ring in his voice.

"That is so, Edie," Abram gasped. "You see, it was this way——" And he hurriedly told the story with which the reader is already familiar. Edie and Ned looked at each other and then at Abram with white, scared faces, but neither of them dared ask the question that was on their lips, and Abram had not the courage to answer it for them. "You see, there are important estates in question," he went on, as though anxious to gain time. "Pendormic is a beautiful place. In my young days I lived not far away from it. Ay, and it all comes back to me in dreams. Briar Nook was as pretty a place as God Almighty ever made. And it's part of Pendormic now." And Abram rose from his chair, and took two or three turns round the room.

"Do they keep horses and carriages there, and all that?" Ned asked, with flashing eyes.

"Ay, any amount. Oh, I can tell you Pendormic is a grand place!"

"But you have not told us yet," said Edie, with sudden energy, "which—which—that is—which of us belongs to you." And his usually calm eyes shone with the intensity of his excitement.

"I'm coming to that," Abram gasped, pressing his

hand to his side. "I'm expecting Mr. Carve here every minute."

"I reckon it's Ned," Edie said, with glowing face. "It's like Ned: he's fond of horses, and all that kind of thing."

Abram's lips moved in reply, but no sound escaped them. He felt as if he were being suffocated. Rushing to the door, he threw it open, and stepped out into the little garden. The fresh air quickly revived him. The pure winds of heaven cleared his brain. The blue sky and bright sunshine seemed to still the wild beating of his heart. He felt himself again.

The boys followed him, for they were nearly as excited as he.

"It's Ned, isn't it, father?" Edie asked, going up to Abram, and taking his hard hand in his.

Abram cast an imploring look from one to the other.

"Is it I, father?" Ned asked, with trembling lip.

The man's pallid face twitched nervously, but he pulled himself together by a mighty effort.

"No, Ned," he gasped; "Edie must go away."

"Am I Mr. Trefusa's grandson?" the lad asked, with a strange, wondering look in his eyes.

Abram nodded his head, for all power of speech had for the moment left him.

Edie stood stock-still, with downcast eyes, and lips from which every vestige of colour had fled, trembling painfully.

Ned rushed up to him impulsively and kissed him.

"I'm glad you are to be a rich man, Edie!" he said. "And you'll be able to go to college, and buy all the books you want. But I shall miss you awfully;" and his eyes filled with tears in a moment, which he resolutely dashed away.

Edie threw his arms around him, and his own large eyes grew misty.

"It ought to have been you, Ned. You are so fond of horses, you know, and——"

"No, Edie; I should never make a gentleman," Ned answered. "I'm a rough, harum-scarum boy, fit for Australia, perhaps, but I should never be fit for a squire."

"But didn't you hear just now that my father was harum-scarum? Oh, it does seem funny that I'm not a bit like him."

"But you are a gentleman, Edie. You've always been gentle and kind. It's your nature, and I'm awful proud of you."

"But it kills me to think of going away and leaving you," Edie answered impulsively. "I wonder if I can't still stay here with you?"

Meanwhile Abram had seated himself on the doorstep and was breathing hard. At last he had taken the irrevocable step. The struggle of ten long years and more had culminated; the fatal word had at last been spoken; the die had been cast, and he must abide by the result.

As is usual in such cases, an immediate reaction had set in. A new light seemed to fall upon his conduct; a new series of possibilities loomed suddenly before him; a new set of contingencies leaped into prominence.

With a groan he set his back firmly against the door-post, and looked off upon a distant range of hills with a wild and troubled expression in his eyes.

Then suddenly the garden-gate clicked, and Mr. Carve came nimbly forward.

CHAPTER VIII.

PARTING WORDS.

"Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own."
Hamlet.

MR. CARVE was a dapper man of about forty years of age. He was slenderly built, which made him appear taller than he really was. His face was pleasant, though the expression of his mouth was a little hard. His hair was thin on the top of his head, and light of colour; his fair moustache was of the military rather than the legal type. He spoke as he walked, sharply and briskly.

Abram rose to meet him, and Ned escaped suddenly into the house.

"You are Mr. Foy—ah, of course," he said, extending his hand. "And this is——" turning to Edie. "But I saw another lad just now."

"Yes; he is my own son," Abram said doggedly.

"Oh yes, indeed, to be sure. And this is Mr. Edward Trefusa's son? Not much like his father, I should say—that is, judging from what I have heard."

"You did not know his father, then?" Abram questioned.

"No, I did not. No."

Abram breathed more freely.

"And, of course, you did not know his mother?"

"No ; I had not that pleasure."

"I have all the necessary documents," Abram said, in a hard tone of voice. "If you will come into the house, you can examine them at your leisure."

"Thank you ; that is, of course, the most important part of my business," the lawyer answered, and casting another penetrating glance at Edie, he followed Abram into the house.

Abram came to the door a moment later.

"Perhaps you and Ned had better go to school as usual," he said kindly. "You'll be happier there than mooning about here doing nothing."

"Where is Ned ?" Edie asked.

"In his room, I fancy. You'd better go and root him out. The talk of this morning has driven school out of his mind, I reckon ;" and Abram turned back again into the house.

Edie found Ned lying face downwards on his bed. This was such an unusual proceeding that he grew alarmed, and quickly betrayed his fears in the tones of his voice.

"Are you ill, Ned ?" he asked anxiously, coming close to the bedside.

Ned started in a moment, and rolled out on the far side, keeping his face averted, as though ashamed to be seen.

"Why, Ned, what is the matter with you ?" Edie pleaded. "Aren't you well ?"

"Oh yes ; I'm all right," Ned answered, keeping his face still averted. "I was only wondering what I should do without you."

"Will you miss me so very much, do you think ?" and Edie's voice had a little pathetic shake in it that Ned was quick to detect.

"I shall miss you everywhere," Ned answered resolutely.

"But don't think, Edie, that I'm not glad that you will come into your rights."

"I don't think I'm glad at all," was the reply. "But I've hardly had time to weigh things up yet. Everything seems muddled, just like a dream. But so far I feel more sorry than glad. I almost wish I could wake up and find everything just like it was before."

"Oh no, Edie; you must not talk in that way. It's a grand thing for you. Think of being a proper squire, with loads of money, and a big house, and horses, and everything you want;" and Ned gave a great gulp, and brushed his hand quickly across his eyes.

"You would enjoy it a great deal more than I shall," Edie answered thoughtfully. "I don't care very much for such things. I do wish I could give half of it to you."

"You'll forget me, Edie, when you get to be a great man——"

But he did not finish the sentence. Edie's arms were about his neck in a moment.

"Hush, Ned," he said; "you know I shall never forget you. Never! never! Oh, I wish I was your real brother, and could stay with you always!"

"You'll feel different when you get away," Ned replied doggedly; "but I hope you won't forget us, all the same."

"Do you think you would forget me if you went away?" Edie asked.

"You're better to remember than I am, Edie. You are always doing such kind things. And you make people love you so terrible hard that they couldn't forget you, however hard they tried." And Ned turned away his face again.

"You make me feel mean when you talk that way," Edie answered, after a pause. "I'm sure there's nobody kinder than you. And if only you and dad could go with me, I shouldn't mind a bit."

"There's no chance of that," was the quick reply. "But some day, when I'm a man and have made heaps of money, I shall come to see you. I want to see England very much."

"Perhaps we shall all live together again some day," Edie answered thoughtfully; and into his large dark eyes there stole a dreamy, far-away look, as though he were picturing some pleasant meeting in the distant future. Suddenly he started. "Oh, Ned!" he exclaimed, "we shall be late for school, and father thought we had better go as usual."

"I never thought of school," the other answered. "Everything's got mixed; everything seems coming to an end. But let's go, Edie. I suppose it's the last time we shall ever go together."

And he dashed his hand across his eyes again, for the tears would come in spite of himself.

When they returned in the evening, Mr. Carve had taken his departure; but he would return again, they were told, on the following morning.

"We've settled everything," Abram said, in answer to Edie's inquiry, and his voice shook a little as he spoke. "And now he wants to be off as quickly as possible."

"Off where?"

"Off back to England."

"And am I to stay here with you?" and a great light shone suddenly in the lad's eyes.

"Would you like to stay here with me?" Abram asked pathetically.

"Better than anything else in the world!" was the answer.

Abram bit his lip, and looked troubled.

"It cannot be, Edie," he said, after a long pause. "Your grandfather wants to see you—ay, and to fit you for the position you are to occupy later on."

"Then it's my duty to go away?" the boy asked, his eyes filling.

"Yes; you *must* go!"

Edie was silent. Nor did he express any further word of regret. If it was his duty to go, nothing more could be said. He was not mercurial like Ned. His emotion did not easily reach the surface, as in his foster-brother's case. He could not wear his heart upon his sleeve if he tried. But he felt none the less deeply on that account. Indeed, it is to be questioned if either Abram or Ned felt the coming separation as acutely as he did.

It did not take long to pack his belongings into a wooden trunk, and then the three sat moody and, for the most part, silent till nearly bedtime. They neither of them knew how much they had grown to be to each other till the parting came. But that is often so. We go our ways from day to day, intent upon buying and selling and getting again, and heedless of the treasure that is close to our side, unresponsive to the love that is longing for recognition, silent to the dear heart that is hungering for a word of affection. It is not that we do not love; we simply do not think. We take things for granted because we lack imagination, and only awake to the fact that we had dwelt with an angel when the guest has departed, never more to return.

But while with the boys pure, unpolluted grief filled their hearts, it was not so with Abram. The pain that gnawed him like a cruel, hungry tooth was made up of many ingredients. He had reached the end of a long moral struggle, and felt exhausted and regretful, and generally unhinged. He sometimes wondered if it was too late even now to go back upon what he had done. At other times he felt a sense of elation and satisfaction. Now he would call himself a prudent, far-seeing man, and anon he chided himself with being an unmitigated fool.

He was the first to break the silence.

"I hope, Edie, whatever happens in the future, that you will try to think kindly of me. If I have made mistakes, believe me, I've tried to do for the best."

"Oh, dad, I shall never cease to love you!" the boy answered impulsively.

"I hope it may be so," Abram answered huskily. "But amid new scenes much may happen. You will be seeing the old country soon. Would that these eyes might look upon it once more!"

"But you will return some day, surely?"

"I should like to think so. But God Almighty only knows. In the Pendormic estate there is a little farm called Briar Nook. When you go round that way think of me. I was born there, remember, and there I hoped to die. For years I looked upon it as mine, but——"

"And was it not yours?" Edie asked

"In equity yes, but not in law. I hope the fir-trees are still there. You might spare them and the orchard and the double thorn hedge in the years to come for my sake."

"I will. Yes, I will."

"But say nothing to thy—thy grandfather of what I have said. He thinks I am another Fowey. He spells the name in a different way. Let him think so still. It's best he should. Do you understand?"

"No; I do not see why he shouldn't know."

"You will see some day clear enough. So take my advice, and keep your own counsel. Nothing is lost, as a rule, by keeping a still tongue. The least said is always soonest mended. When words are said we can't unsay 'em. But let us go to bed. We shall be happier asleep than awake."

Happier asleep? Yes; but sleep would not come to any of them. In the middle of the night Edie heard Ned

sobbing on the other side of the room, and he slipped out of his own bed and went and lay by his foster-brother's side.

"Oh, Ned," he said, "don't take on so. It's hard enough to go away as it is, but if I see you fretting I shall break my heart."

"I'll try to bear up, Edie," Ned replied, still sobbing; "but I don't know what I shall do when you're gone. There ain't no good in me but it comes from you. You keep me out of all the scrapes, and help me with my lessons, and make me tell the truth. Oh, Edie, I shall be an awful boy when you're gone."

"No, you won't, Ned. You'll always be strong and kind. You can't help it. I know you flare up sudden, but you ain't the worse for that, for you never sulk."

"Oh, don't I, though? I know I shall do nothing else but sulk when you're gone. I tell you, Edie, I can't bear to think of it. It makes me grow cold all over!"

"We don't do any good by thinking about it," said Edie. "We'd better wait till it comes, and make the best of it. You will have father to talk to, and I shall have nobody."

"But you'll have new things to see every day, and new places to go to, and new books to read. Oh, Edie, you'll have a rare time of it. I believe that down at bottom I'm terribly jealous."

Edie laughed at this statement so heartily that even Ned at length joined in, and the Angel of Sleep, passing by at the time, seized the opportunity when their hearts were lightened a little of their load, and gently fanned them both to sleep.

Early in the morning Abram stole into their room, but he did not disturb them. For several moments he stood with trembling lip looking at them; then, brushing his sleeve slowly across his eyes, he left the room as silently as he entered.

It was late when the boys came down to breakfast, for Abram was determined they should have their sleep out; but the meal was only a make-believe, after all. Each one did his best to be cheerful, but gaiety that is forced becomes pathetic.

Directly after breakfast Mr. Carve put in an appearance.

"If possible," he said to Abram, "I would like to start for Melbourne by the noon train. Would that be convenient, do you think?"

"He's quite ready now, for that matter," Abram replied. "We packed all his things last night."

"You won't think it very hurried?"

"Oh no. Since it has to be, the sooner the better. We shall feel very strange without him, but we shall have to get used to it."

"And what do you say, Master Edward?" the lawyer questioned, turning to Edie.

Edie started and coloured. To be called "Master Edward" was something new in his experience, but he recovered in an instant.

"I'm ready any time," he said quietly.

"That's right—that's right," Mr. Carve replied, with a dry smile. "You see, we shall need a little time at Melbourne before we sail. It's a longish voyage, you know, and you'll need a good many things for the journey."

"Is it a big ship we shall go in?" Edie questioned.

"Oh yes; it is a very large ship. I hope you are a good sailor."

"I've never been on a ship in my life," Edie replied; "but I don't think I shall be frightened."

"Frightened? I should think not. There's nothing to be frightened of. You will enjoy it immensely when you get your sea-legs."

Edie rather resented the lawyer's hard, matter-of-fact

way of speaking, but he made no further reply. He did not want to judge hastily, and he thought that perhaps he would like him better when he got to know more of him.

Promptly at half-past eleven a cab pulled up at the door, and Edie, with a strange look of bewilderment in his eyes, was hurried out of the house.

In after-days that parting seemed like a dream to him. He tried again and again to recall it; but at best he could get only a confused picture, without order or sequence. He remembered Ned, after he had kissed him, rushing upstairs, and that was nearly all he could remember. He looked for his face at the window, but it did not appear, and then the cab drove swiftly away. And after that he felt interested in nothing until they got to Melbourne.

Directly on arrival there, Mr. Carve put Edie into the hands of a fashionable tailor.

"These clothes you have," he explained, "are altogether too worn and antiquated. You will look quite a gentleman when you are properly dressed."

Edie blushed, but said nothing. The lawyer's words seemed somehow a reflection on his foster-father, and anything in that line he resented deeply.

Perhaps Mr. Carve saw his mistake; for he said, after a pause:

"Of course, your clothes are all right for the station you have occupied, and I must say that Mr. Fowey has behaved to you very handsomely. Everything your father left—not much, of course—was untouched and well invested. I must say Mr. Fowey has impressed me very favourably."

"There isn't a better man living," Edie said impulsively; "and no one will be a friend of mine who says a word against him."

"A very proper remark," the lawyer observed sagely—"a very proper remark. It does credit both to your heart and

your head. But, of course, you will have to remember now that you are a Trefusa."

"I'm no different on that account," the boy answered. "Names don't alter anything."

"They do sometimes," the lawyer said dryly, after which they both relapsed into silence.

On the morning on which they sailed Edie got a surprise. He was walking by Mr. Carve's side, when he suddenly exclaimed, "There's Dan!" and bounded across the street.

Dan lifted his eyebrows, and gave a prolonged whistle when Edie stood before him.

"Are you very much surprised to see me?" the lad asked.

"Well, rather," Dan replied, his small eyes contracting. "I should hardly have knowed you again, you're dressed up so fine. What's the meanin' of it, and where's your father and Ned?"

Edie explained in a few words the change that had come over his fortunes, at which Dan gave another long whistle, while his small eyes contracted further still.

"And the place is called Pendormic, is it?" Dan asked quickly, seeing Mr. Carve hurrying across the street.

"Yes; it's in Cornwall; and if you ever come to England, Dan, you must come and see me."

"Yes, I'll come and see you," he answered significantly. "Good luck to you!" and the next moment he was lost in the crowd.

"Who is that man?" Mr. Carve asked shortly, when he came up.

"Oh, it's only Dan. He was our foreman when we lived at Goolong Creek, and one of the best fellows in the world."

"Oh, indeed! He does not look a very desirable acquaintance."

"But he's lots better than he looks."

“It is to be hoped so. But let us hurry on, for we have no more time to waste.”

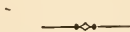
Later in the day, from the deck of the steamer, Edie watched the land of his birth fading into the distance, and felt, with a poignant sense of loss, that the old life had ended, and that a new and untried life had begun.

BOOK II.

DANGER.

“To man in this his trial state
The privilege is given,
When tost by tides of human fate,
To anchor fast in heaven.”

WATTS.



CHAPTER I.

DOROTHY.

“She’s beautiful, and therefore to be woo’d;
She’s a woman, and therefore to be won.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“Look, Dorothy, that’s the young squire, you may depend.” And Miss Jane instinctively raised her hand to her curls and cap to make sure that they were not out of position. “Do you see him, Dorothy?” Miss Jane questioned, going closer to the window that she might get a better view.

“See who?” the young girl asked, raising her dark blue eyes from a book that lay open on her lap.

“You can see nothing from where you are,” Miss Jane replied, a little impatiently. “Do get out of the book, child, and come and look.”

Dorothy laughed, then rose slowly to her feet and came and stood by Miss Jane’s side.

"Is it the gentleman on horseback you wish me to look at, aunty?" she asked, her large eyes brimming over with merriment.

"Yes, child. Isn't he handsome?" And Miss Jane's fingers sought her curls once more, and touched them very tenderly.

"The back of his head is well shaped; but that is all I can see at present," Dorothy answered.

"You should have come when I called you, child. His horse was standing just outside the gate then; now he's got behind the hedge somewhat. But I'm almost certain that it's the young squire. There, he's moving round into sight again. Look at him, Dorothy."

"Yes, aunty, I am looking at him. What is the next part of the show?"

"The next part of the—— Dorothy, how you do talk. Your indifference to things is really quite provoking—it is indeed!"

"I'm very sorry, aunty, but I am looking as hard as ever I can—I am really. Would you like me to throw open the window?" and the girl's eyes sparkled and her lips twitched with suppressed merriment.

"Throw open the window, child? Not for the world!" Miss Jane exclaimed, in consternation. "Why, he would be sure to see us; and what would he think?"

"Why, he would think we were duly admiring him, as becomes our low estate."

"Our low estate, did you say? Well, really! What next!"

"I meant to say as becomes our sex, aunty."

"Worse and worse. Child, what has got into you?"

"I've had nothing stronger than tea, I can assure you," Dorothy answered, with pretended seriousness. "But what does the man want sitting on his horse directly outside our gate?"

"He's on the highroad, my dear, and has a perfect right to pull up his horse wherever he likes." And Miss Jane shifted her position a little, so that she could still further improve her view.

"Well, if he's stopped there just to be looked at, I think it is very vain of him. Indeed, it is in exceedingly bad taste, and I shall not encourage such ways by looking at him." And Dorothy, with pretended indifference, turned her back upon the window, and moved toward the chair she had vacated.

Miss Jane looked at her niece with a puzzled expression on her homely face. She never seemed to know with any degree of certainty when to take her seriously. Her face would often be quite grave when her eyes would be running over with merriment, while her silvery laugh would break in upon the most solemn discussion and bring it to an abrupt termination.

"Of course, Dorothy, he is not stopping there to be looked at," Miss Jane said, after a pause. "He is talking with Watty Trelyon, and I think it is very kind of him to waste so much time on that disagreeable old man."

"Perhaps he has nothing to do," Dorothy suggested, "and is glad of a little entertainment."

"I expect Watty is complaining about his farm again," Miss Jane answered. "He's always some grievance to air. I think he's the most discontented man I ever knew. The seasons are always worse for him than anybody else. If the young squire will listen to him, he will have little else to do."

Dorothy turned and faced her aunt with a look of interest in her eyes.

"Is it the young Squire of Pendormic that you are alluding to, aunty?" she asked.

"Why, yes, my dear. Who else did you think I could mean?"

"I'm sure I don't know. There are thousands of young squires in the country, I suppose, and I don't think I thought anything about it."

"There may be in the country, Dorothy," Miss Jane answered gravely. "But there's only one in these parts; only one that is—that is a real squire, you know."

Dorothy went closer to the window and looked again at the young horseman, who was still curbing his horse close to the gate.

"I don't think I should pronounce him good-looking exactly," she said, after a pause. "He looks very grave for so young a man."

"He's a great student, they say," Miss Jane answered. "Cares more for books than he does for horses, and takes more pleasure in making experiments than in riding after the hounds."

"He looks as though he wanted shaking up a bit," Dorothy said, with a laugh. "If he had me to live with, he would not look so solemn."

"Child, how you do talk!" said Miss Jane gravely. "Really, really——"

"That's the second time you have said that within the last five minutes, aunty. But there goes your squire at last. Yes, he is a fine, well-built young fellow; I like the back of his head particularly."

"My dear child——"

"How you do talk!" Dorothy chimed in, with laughing eyes.

Miss Jane dropped into her chair and took up her knitting. She could not be angry with her niece, and yet she was not altogether pleased with her levity.

For many years Miss Jane had lived alone with servants,

devoting herself mainly to works of charity and to entertaining the travelling preachers who visited her house with great regularity. As a consequence, she had grown into serious ways. Life was a solemn thing, while her conception of religion allowed no room for mirth or trifling.

She was not gloomy by nature. In her young days she loved mirth and merrymaking as well as anyone, and even now she was conscious of an unconquerable hankering after some of the pleasures of the world, but which hankering she attributed to the natural depravity of the human heart, and so struggled against it with might and main.

When the ministers stayed at her house she was more than usually serious in manner and conversation. She conceived, naturally enough, that ministers were essentially a grave and solemn race of men! How could it be otherwise? If they believed what they preached, mirth was out of the question. Hence, when it was Miss Jane's turn to take the travelling preacher—and her turn somehow came with remarkable frequency—she always arrayed herself in her most sober gowns, settled her face into an expression of becoming gravity, and led the conversation over the tea-table into channels of deep solemnity. She imagined, so guileless was she, that it would please and gratify the reverend gentlemen, while they maintained a due seriousness out of respect for her. She always kept a good table, however, and that atoned for much.

Green Bank had been a home for the travelling preachers ever since Miss Jane could remember, and what her father and mother had done with so much pride and pleasure, she was prepared to carry on to the best of her ability. It was a little trying sometimes, no doubt. Occasionally her holiday arrangements were completely upset, and now and then overworked pastors or returned missionaries nearly outstayed their welcome. But there are little drawbacks

to nearly everything, and Miss Jane used to comfort herself in the trying times of life by quoting to herself a favourite passage of Scripture: "Be not unmindful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels un-awares."

One of these angels her father had entertained twenty years before, who became in a few weeks a son-in-law. Miss Jane was never quite reconciled to her sister Amelia marrying a Methodist travelling preacher. Great as her reverence was for them as a class, she felt somehow that they were altogether too other-worldly and scarcely sufficiently domesticated for the marriage state.

Amelia was a light-hearted girl, by no means disposed to take her pleasures sadly or to indulge in gloomy views of life; and yet she stood at the altar by the side of this big-boned parson without any apparent misgiving. It was surmised by some people that she knew parsons better than her sister Jane.

Well, that was twenty years ago. And now Dorothy, Amelia's child, had come back to the old home. She had come because her mother was dead, and her father had married again.

Miss Jane was very grieved when her sister died. But she was more than grieved—she was shocked—when her brother-in-law led a second wife to the altar. It was some consolation to her, however—good Christian as she was—when she discovered that the new wife was a vixen.

"It just serves him right, and I'm very glad," she said to herself.

She knew that it was a very wrong feeling to cherish, she knew that she ought to be sorry, and she suffered no little from periodic qualms of conscience as the outcome of this unchristian spirit; yet, all the same, deep down in her heart, she was profoundly gratified that her brother-in-law

had caught a tartar, and sincerely hoped that a second bereavement might not bring him deliverance.

Dorothy had her father's good looks with her mother's bright and genial temperament. It was impossible for her to be dull, and nearly impossible for others to be dull in her company. Before she had been in the house twenty-four hours, Miss Jane felt as if a hurricane had swept through it. The silence was broken by continual snatches of song. Windows were thrown open that Miss Jane kept religiously shut. The maids in the kitchen found themselves shaking with uncontrollable fits of laughter. Dance-music flashed out from the disused piano. Indeed, the whole place seemed to wake up after a long and profound sleep.

Miss Jane was greatly puzzled how a girl brought up in the house of a minister could be so full of fun and what she called "frivolity." Before her arrival at Green Bank "for good," Miss Jane had not seen her for several years. Mr. Gray had been "travelling" in the North of England, and visits to Cornwall as a consequence had been exceedingly rare. Miss Jane remembered her niece as a wild romp of a girl of twelve or thirteen, but naturally supposed that the last five or six years had wrought a great change in her.

As a matter of fact they had. Dorothy had grown to be an exceedingly handsome woman—tall, graceful, and well-knit. But in temper and disposition she had scarcely changed at all.

"My dear Dorothy," Miss Jane said, a few days after her arrival, "no one would ever take you to be a minister's daughter. You are really not at all serious."

"But I'm myself, aunty, which is very much better."

"Yourself! Yes, indeed. But you ought to consider your antecedents and upbringing."

"I do, aunty; I try to keep all the commandments."

"I should hope so indeed!" And Miss Jane raised her hands in quiet consternation.

"Would you have me put on mittens, and wear spectacles, and read the Bible all day long, aunty dear?" Dorothy asked after a pause.

"Well, no, my dear, I don't think I would," Miss Jane said reflectively. "But you might be a little sedate and seriously disposed."

"Well, I will when I get your age, aunty. There, I promise you!" and she danced out of the room to the tune of "Johnny comes marching home again."

Dorothy had been six weeks at Green Bank when Miss Jane called her to the window to have a look at the young Squire of Pendormic, with such results as we have seen. Dorothy, however, was much more interested than she professed to be. In her drives round the country with Miss Jane she had greatly admired the stately old mansion set on the slope of a beautifully rounded and finely-wooded hill, with green terraces sloping away from the front, and fine stretches of park and pasture in all directions.

She had often wondered what it would feel like to be owner of such a fair property, and whether people who lived in such grand houses were really happier and more content than those who occupied a humbler sphere.

She had also heard fragments of the history of the Trefusa family, just sufficient to whet her appetite and stimulate her curiosity. It is true that what she had heard had not been very much to their credit. Old Peter, who was now seventy-five years of age, and tough as a cobbler's thong, was represented as an accentuated Shylock, who, in the language of the village folk, would skin a flint for a sixpence and spoil a shilling knife in the operation. His eldest son, Tom, who had been drowned several years before, was spoken of as being more mean and grasping than the old man himself.

Of the other son, Edward, very little was known, as he left the country soon after Peter purchased the Pendormic estates; but rumours spoke of him as a harum-scarum young fellow, generous enough, but terribly headstrong, and who would go his own way, whatever the consequences might be.

The story of how old Peter discovered that he had a grandson in the wilds of Australia was told in St. Aubyn Churchtown and surrounding villages with much circumstance and many variations. Indeed, there were so many variations that no one was certain which was the true version. This fact, however, rather added to the interest than otherwise. In spite of all that was known, there was still a certain amount of mystery surrounding Trefusa's heir—a mystery that the gossips had never been able successfully to penetrate.

All that was known with absolute certainty was that, seven years before, Mr. Carve, of the firm of Whittle and Carve, acting under instructions from old Peter, had gone out to Australia; that after a few months he had returned, bringing with him a lad of some thirteen years of age, having satisfied himself by undoubted evidence that the lad in question was the son of Edward Trefusa, Peter's younger son.

Beyond these bare facts nothing else was known with any degree of certainty. Old Peter was not the man to take the general public into his confidence, whilst Messrs. Whittle and Carve preserved an absolute silence on the subject. That rumour ran riot for many months was only what might be expected. The mere suggestion of mystery surrounding the matter made the curious ones all the more keen and inquisitive, and goaded gossip into a furious gallop.

It was said that old Peter was terribly disappointed when

his grandson appeared upon the scene. That he vowed, with many oaths, that some mistake had been made; that there was not a single element of the Trefusa character in his composition, and that he would have all the evidence sifted again from top to bottom.

There was no proof, however, that such gossip had any truth in it. It was, no doubt, a fact that the lad bore no resemblance to Peter, or to his son Tom, or to Tom's daughter Mona, who lived with her mother in a trim little cottage on the Pendormic estates.

Unfortunately, there was no one in St. Aubyn who knew anything about the lad's father. Edward Trefusa was merely a name, not even a memory. If he ever lived at Pendormic, it could only have been for the briefest period, and in the earliest days of Peter's occupancy.

Miss Jane had a fancy that she remembered Edward Trefusa—a handsome, dashing young fellow—riding through the village of St. Aubyn on a splendid chestnut mare; but that would be from twenty-five to thirty years ago, and the recollection was so vague as to be of no value to her.

The Trefusas were not natives of St. Aubyn. They came from a place a good many miles away, and very little was known of them till Peter purchased the Pendormic estates. Of course, as in all such cases, rumour preceded him, and in his case rumour was anything but flattering to his character.

When young Edward arrived from Australia, everybody, of course, was anxious to have a look at him. People went up to the Hall on all manner of excuses and pretences. The servants, when they came into the village, were questioned to such an extent that they were glad to get back again; and the boy himself was so stared at if he ever ventured outside the park gates, that he carefully shunned St. Aubyn Churchtown, and took his walks in quiet places where he was not likely to meet inquisitive eyes.

Hence it came about that very little was seen or known of Trefusa's heir. He had not been in England many weeks before Peter sent him away to school, and in time he was passed on to one of the Universities, where rumour said he early won considerable distinction.

That Miss Jane should be interested in his return home again was the most natural thing in the world. For some weeks past rumour had been busy in asserting that he was about to settle down at Pendornic for good; that old Peter was anxious that he should begin to take the management of affairs into his own hands; and that the young man was quite prepared to assume his share of responsibility. Farmers were hopeful that he would inaugurate a more generous policy, and shopkeepers were not without anticipations that his residence in the neighbourhood would considerably increase the local trade.

"Yes, my dear," said Miss Jane to Dorothy, as she quietly went on with her knitting, "I shouldn't be surprised if he doesn't waken up St. Aubyn considerably, and perhaps we shall see a great deal more of him than we have been in the habit of doing."

The latter part of which surmise was realized to an extent that Miss Jane had never dreamed of.

CHAPTER II.

YOUTH AND AGE.

"Years following years, steal something every day;
At last they steal us from ourselves away."

POPE.

THE familiar name Edie was never used at Pendormic. Peter insisted on giving him his full name. "I hate pet names, nicknames, and such-like familiarities," he said with far more energy than the occasion demanded. "Let people have their proper names and nothing else. They've called you Edie, have they, out there in that benighted country? More fools they! We've got more sense here. Edie—what nonsense! It isn't a name fit for a poodle. You were christened Edward, and Edward it shall be. It's a king's name, and you ought to be proud of it."

"I don't much care what you call me," the boy answered; "only it sounds familiar. It's what I've been used to all my life."

"So much the more reason it should be dropped," Peter said in his most dogmatic manner. "You've done with the old life now, and the sooner you forget it the better."

"I shall never forget it," was the quiet reply, "and I wouldn't like to if I could."

"Would not, eh? Well, boy, we shall see. Heroics of that kind are common to the young; you'll know better as you get older."

"Why should I know better?" the boy asked innocently. "There's nothing to be ashamed of, is there? I never knew any other father, and Ned will always be like a brother to me as long as I live."

Peter laughed harshly and cynically, but he did not debate the question any further just then. The lad had only just arrived from Australia, and was already as homesick as he could be, and Peter had sense enough to see that no good could come of arguing the question, and that any attempt at coercion would defeat the very end he had in view.

But the old familiar name was heard no more, and after a while the lad grew reconciled to the change. Indeed, he grew reconciled to the change of name much more quickly than he did to the change of surroundings. Life in the big mansion, with servants here, there, and everywhere, lacked the freeness and ease and abandon that he had been used to all his days. Besides, he pined for the companionship of his foster-brother, and heartily wished that what the world called his good fortune had never come to him.

When a school was at length decided upon, he hailed the change with delight, and for the next seven years Pendormic saw him only during vacations. Those seven years changed the boy into a man. At twenty he was older in manner and in appearance than most men at twenty-five. Tall, erect, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, with a well-shaped head, dark lustrous eyes, and a finely-chiselled mouth and chin, he was a noticeable figure anywhere.

From a physical point of view old Peter was proud of him, and declared that in height and stature he did credit to the name of Trefusa; but beyond that point Peter's admiration did not extend.

"I don't like his sober bookish ways," Peter said to Mr.

Whittle on the very afternoon, and indeed at the very hour, when Miss Jane Pendray was regarding the young squire with so much interest and curiosity.

"I don't think that is a bad fault," Mr. Whittle said reflectively; "particularly in these days, when young fellows are all too ready to go the pace."

"Yes, of course; extremes are bad in anything. I have no wish that he should be exactly like his father, but I wish he had a little more of his father's spirit in him, all the same."

"Perhaps he has more of it than you think," said Mr. Whittle. "Still waters, you know, run deep."

"No, Whittle. I've watched him pretty closely, and I've had his character from those who have known him at college, and I tell you he's not the least bit gamey. He ought to be a curate or a Dissenting parson. Upon my soul, I don't think he's fit for anything else."

"I think you are judging him a bit harshly," said Mr. Whittle. "I confess, if he were my grandson, I should be very proud of him. There is a dignity and a solidity about him very refreshing in these days of flippancy and foppishness."

"But think of a young fellow who does not care to ride after the hounds, who takes little or no interest in sports of any kind, who has no great love for dogs or horses, who will moon about in the library from morning till night. tell you, it isn't like a Trefusa to act in that way."

"Better that than making ducks and drakes of his money," Mr. Whittle retorted. "Bless me! would you have an heir who would squander the estates, and with as few scruples as you had in getting them together?"

Old Peter flushed to the roots of his thin black hair. "Come, Whittle," he said, "that is forbidden ground."

"Not so," was the reply; "no ground is forbidden

between ourselves. You and I are in the same boat, and have been for more than thirty years."

"But nothing is gained by raking up the past. The estates are mine, and you have been well paid for your share in the business."

"Paid! Yes; and what satisfaction has it brought me, or you either? I question if there are two more miserable old fossils in the country than you and I."

"Speak for yourself, Whittle. I've not made so badly out of life, and I've not done with it yet, either. I'm good for another ten years with reasonable luck."

"Then you ought to be all the more thankful that your grandson is not likely to give you any anxiety." And the old lawyer turned on his heel and limped slowly away.

Peter was sitting under the veranda in the afternoon sunshine when Edward returned to the house. From under his shaggy eyebrows he watched the young man as he bounded up the broad flight of steps that intersected the terraces, and envied him his magnificent strength. To the withered old man, youth at that moment seemed a very beautiful thing. He would have given—ay, he would have given half of his estates if he could have put back the hand upon the dial thirty years. He had boasted to the lawyer that he had not done with life yet, and yet it was getting to be a burden to him. The things that once gave him pleasure now made him peevish, and what was once a delight was now a weariness to the flesh. The only thing that had not relaxed its hold upon him was his greed of gain. He had got beyond the stage of caring for the things that money could buy. What are termed the luxuries of life no longer appealed to him. He was as frugal in his fare as the humblest cotter on his estates, and yet any intimation that his rent-roll was decreasing filled him with acutest anguish.

He sometimes reflected on this curious problem, not with

any desire to reach a more generous plane of life ; it was simply to him an interesting speculation that filled up his time pleasantly.

He was far more anxious to get than he was to save. He was quite prepared to give Edward a big allowance, and would have taken pleasure in seeing him spend it, providing, of course, he did not spend it in charity. He hated charity ; spoke strongly on the pauperizing influence of benevolent institutions, and was careful to keep his name off all subscription-lists. Yet, had Edward wanted a hundred pounds or five hundred for some pleasure-freak, he would have given the money freely.

Edward was not long in weighing up his grandfather's character, and, it need hardly be said, he was not enamoured of it. Indeed, the whole moral atmosphere of Pendormic affected him unpleasantly. The old man's avaricious, mistrustful spirit pervaded the whole place. Even the servants had no confidence in their master or in each other. He gave them as little as he could, never considered their interests or well-being, and so they looked upon it as a solemn duty to get everything out of him that was possible, and by every possible means.

"Well, Edward, what have you been doing with yourself this afternoon?" was the old man's greeting as his grandson drew near.

"I fear I've not been doing much," was the reply. "I've been just taking a quiet canter round the neighbourhood, that's all."

"And a very proper thing to do," said Peter gruffly—"a very proper thing. One has need to keep his eyes open in these days, or he'll be fleeced on all ends and sides."

"Is that so?" Edward asked, lifting his eyebrows slightly.

"So? I tell you there isn't a tenant on Pendormic that wouldn't cheat me right and left if he had the chance ; ay,

and believe he was performing a praiseworthy action in doing it."

"They do not give me the impression of being people of that class," Edward answered, looking the old man steadily in the eyes.

"They don't, eh?"

"No. They strike me generally as being a very honest and industrious race of people."

"That's because you don't know 'em."

"I don't know them very intimately, I admit. But I'm getting to know them little by little."

"That's right. Get to know 'em thoroughly. It'll be an eye-opener for you."

"Are they all bad?"

"Every one of 'em. They're a canting, psalm-singing lot of rogues, that's what they are. I'll tell thee what, lad, there's no honesty left."

"No; surely it's not so bad as that!"

"It's Gospel truth. Honesty is an extinct virtue. The race has died out."

"How can that be, grandfather, when you are alive?"

The old man started to his feet suddenly and clenched his hand, then sat down again, a wintry smile overspreading his face.

"You didn't mean that for a joke, I suppose?" he asked, after a pause.

"I'm not in a joking humour," was the reply.

"Exactly. The subject isn't one to joke about, is it? But tell me who you've seen this afternoon?"

"I haven't been making calls," was the quick reply. "I've only been taking a look round."

"And you've spoken to no one?"

"Yes; one of your tenants accosted me just outside St. Aubyn."

"Which of them?"

"I think he said his name was Trelyon."

"Watty Trelyon, eh! Honest soul, that."

"He did not seem a very cheerful individual."

"Oh, but he is; he's brimming over with mirth and cheerfulness, and as full of thanksgiving as a hymn-book;" and Peter laughed till his sides ached.

Edward looked at the old man in silence. His biting cynicism grated upon his feelings.

"Nobody ever hears Watty complain," Peter went on. "Oh dear no! He's choked so full of contentment that he can hardly button his waistcoat. Didn't he want you to raise his rent?"

"Not quite. His waistcoat was quite big enough for him to-day. Indeed, he looked hungry. And if he is content, he is satisfied with very little."

Peter's face became hard again, and his mouth closed like a gin.

"If you give ear to Watty," he said, after a pause, "you'll have nothing else to do."

"I've promised to look at the things he's complained about, at any rate."

"You have?"

"Yes. I've not so much to do; and if his complaint is reasonable, it ought to be looked into."

"Ought it? When you've lived in the world as long as I have, you'll know better."

"I don't see it. You want me to be a kind of overseer or a chief steward, and I'm willing to do my best."

"Exactly. But life is too short to inquire into every pettifogging complaint that may reach your ears. Watty alone will keep you busy from January to Christmas."

"I shall soon discover whether his grievances are genuine or not."

Peter's thin lips curled again.

"You need not have the least doubt on that score," he said cynically. "All Watty's grievances are genuine—as genuine as the Bible itself. He's such a thankful old Christian that it nearly breaks his heart to complain about anything. Consequently his heart is in a state of chronic collapse."

Edward looked at the old man for a moment or two in silence, then turned on his heel with the intention of walking away.

"Don't go yet," Peter said peevishly. "You've told me nothing. You've not even given me an outline of Watty's discourse."

"I wanted to look into the matter first."

"What matter?"

"Concerning his house. He says that last winter, while his wife lay in bed ill with bronchitis, the snow actually drifted under the slates on to her pillow, and lay in heaps upon the floor."

"And do you believe it?"

"Why should I not? At any rate, I promised him I would call and look at the roof, so that I could judge for myself whether it needed repairing."

"Look here, Edward," said the old man, struggling to his feet, his eyes ablaze with a sinister light, "we might spend all the rent in repairs, and then the scoundrels would not be satisfied. That roof is no worse now than it has been for the last ten years. In fact, it's a first-class roof. There's scarcely a slate out of its place."

"But he says the bedrooms are not ceiled; that originally the roof was 'only plastered against the pin,' whatever that may mean; that the constant rattle of the slates has shaken all the plaster down; that now the wind blows in under all the slates; that in stormy weather they cannot keep a

candle burning ; and that the doctor says another winter like the last in such a room will kill his wife."

"And a good riddance !" snarled Peter.

"That is not the question," Edward answered doggedly. "If the roof is as he represents it, it ought to be repaired."

"And you'll find the money to do it with?" Peter questioned, with a sneer.

"Well, yes ; I'd do that rather than such a state of things should continue," the young man answered ; "though I fear I should have to mortgage my allowance, as it does not allow of a wide margin for charity."

"I should think not. Anything reasonable you shall have ; but if you develop a benevolent craze, you'll get no encouragement from me. It's as well we should understand each other clearly."

"I think I understand you," Edward said pointedly. "But here comes Mona ;" and he ran down the steps and struck out across the lawn to meet his cousin.

Mona was two years younger than Edward, and, judging by appearance, had as little of the Trefusa blood in her veins as he had. She was a sweet, shy maiden, with a large capacity for love and devotion and sacrifice, but with no ambition to cut a figure in the world.

Edward often said to himself that she was the one sweet and refining influence about the place—the one being who was always thinking about other people, and never about herself.

She generally ran across to the Hall two or three times a day, and from Edward, at any rate, she always got the kindest welcome. Until she returned from school a few weeks before, he had scarcely spent an hour in the company of any girl. All his life before he had mixed with men and boys. In his Australian home there was no sister to keep them company ; and since he had been in England, for some

reason or other girls had not come much in his way. Hence they were a mystery to him—an unsolved problem; creatures of a different type and race, pretty, piquant, but terribly puzzling.

While he was away at school, and Mona was away at school, they saw very little of each other. They only met during the holidays, and, being both shy and retiring by nature, they kept out of each other's way as much as possible.

The last week or two, however, had worked a wonderful change. The stubborn wall of reserve had been broken down completely. Mona, with true womanly instinct, felt that she could trust this grave, stalwart cousin of hers, and so had opened her heart to him in the freest manner; and he had felt proud to give her the best counsel he could, and constituted himself her knight and champion then and there.

No one raised any objection to their being so much together; indeed, everyone approved of it. If Edward married Mona, it would be one way of keeping all the Trefusa money in the Trefusa family, and such an arrangement suited Peter's views exactly.

For a few moments he watched the young couple strolling slowly across the lawn, while a curious smile flickered over his withered old face.

"Ay, let 'em be together," he grunted, after a pause. "It's perhaps the best thing that could happen. She's not just the sort of gal I should take to if I were a young chap. She's pretty enough, and all that, but she hasn't mischief enough in her. I was always fond of a gal that had some go in her."

And he moved two or three steps towards the door, then paused again.

"I don't understand it any road," he said reflectively.

“ But they’re neither of ’em like the Trefusas. Who could imagine a grandson of mine ready to sacrifice his allowance to a complaining old humbug like Watty Trelyon? If everything were not so straightforward, I should be inclined to think Edward’s boy had been changed at nurse—by Heaven, I should ! But Carve is a careful man, so I suppose it is all right. Nature plays some curious freaks sometimes, and the lad, after all, is a credit to anybody. Blow it ! Whittle is right, and I ought to be thankful.”

And with another look at the young couple, who seemed to be veering away from the Hall instead of coming nearer, Peter shuffled his way into the house.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTIVATED.

“ She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used.”

Othello.

It was the most natural thing in the world that Edward should be captivated by his sweet and gentle cousin. Her ways were so winning, her confidences so tender, her trust in him so absolute, that he felt, after a few weeks, that life would be impossible without her. Had he mixed with girls all his life, the spell of Mona's presence might have been less potent ; but emerging suddenly from his lonely boy-life into the sweet companionship of this pure-hearted girl, he succumbed to the charm of her presence at once. A new pleasure had come into his life, so sweet and tender and beguiling that he wanted no other, and fancied that he would be quite content if he and Mona were the only two people in the world. She filled the place in his heart once occupied by his foster-brother Ned. She took away the sense of loneliness that had haunted him so long ; she awoke within him the old spirit of chivalry that was fast dying out ; she supplied him with an interest in life different from everything that had touched him before ; she developed in him a sense of comradeship as beautiful as it was rare.

Every morning, if she did not come across to the Hall,

he went in search of her. Sometimes he had to follow her into the village, sometimes to some distant farmstead, for Mona was not so dependent upon him as he was upon her. She had many interests in the neighbourhood, and many acquaintances ; and, though it was always a pleasure to be with her grave, handsome cousin, it was not the only pleasure she had in life, and she sometimes wondered why he was always so anxious to be with her.

When occasionally he returned to lunch, not having seen his cousin for the morning, he was disposed to mope and to resent her apparent indifference to his company. At such times he would steal away to the library at the earliest possible moment and bury himself in a book, and so try to forget his disappointment in following the fortunes of some imaginary hero or heroine.

Mona generally knew where to find him, and, with foot-falls light as snowflakes, would steal softly into the room and peacefully lay her hands across his eyes.

"Is that you, Mona?" he would ask, with pretended indifference.

"Were you expecting someone else?" she would reply, with a silvery laugh.

"I was expecting no one at all. I thought you were too busy to come here."

"I have been busy all the morning. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing of any value. Chasing shadows, hunting Will-o'-the-wisps, searching for rainbow ends, and such-like."

"How very interesting! Did you find anything or catch anything?"

"Nothing but a bad temper, Mona. I'm beginning to think I am a good deal of a bear."

"Oh no; you are just a great big boy, and considering what boys are generally, I think you are wonderfully good."

"Have you had a large experience of boys, Mona?"

"Oh no; only about average, I should say. But I never liked boys very much; I think generally they are rough, rude, stupid creatures."

"And you regard me as a boy, do you?"

"You are big enough to be a man, certainly; but you are only about twenty, and boys don't get to be men at that age."

"Indeed, Mona; and at what age do you think they reach manhood?"

"Well, twenty-five at the earliest. Don't you think so?"

"I'm sure I don't know. How should I? But now we've hit upon such an interesting topic, might I ask at what age girls become women?"

"Oh, well, that's another matter."

"Of course it's another matter."

"Girls, you know, grow old quicker than boys."

"Indeed, I didn't know."

"That's another proof that boys are stupid. Girls are quite grown up at nineteen, and staid at twenty."

"Then you don't consider yourself quite grown up?"

"Not quite. And I often wish I could stop now where I am. I'm just happy now, with everything I want, and nothing to worry me."

"I thought I worried you sometimes."

"That shows you are not a close observer. You never worry me. You see, you are not flighty and noisy and restless. You are quiet and grave, and so you never give me the fidgets."

"I am glad of that. I should not like to fidget you."

"Well, then, let us not stay here in this dull room any longer. Let us get out into the sunshine."

"I am at your service now, as always;" and the big fellow would walk away with his sweet, dainty cousin, all resentment having gone out of his heart.

He often wondered what word he should use to correctly describe his regard for Mona. Was it love? or only cousinly affection? Did his interest in her rise from the loneliness of his life, or had she, with her winsomeness, stolen his heart? Was she so much to him, because he knew no other woman, or was she the one woman in the world that could satisfy his heart's desire? These were questions that he found himself unable to answer satisfactorily. He only knew that he felt terribly lonely when Mona was not about, and that when he heard her soft voice in the Hall all the gloom would depart as if by magic.

Sometimes another question haunted him: Did Mona care for him except in the most cousinly way? She was fond of his company, he knew, and had, to a large extent, made a confidant of him. But was she touched by any deeper emotion? Would she be so free with him if her heart were stirred by genuine love? Was it not mere companionship that she cared for, and would not any other companion please her just as well?

He was debating these questions with himself one morning while waiting to take his cousin for a drive. He had not seen her for two whole days, and was growing quite impatient for a sight of her sweet, placid face. He had been fulfilling the promise he made to Watty Trelyon, and that had kept him busy; but to let a third day pass without seeing his cousin was out of the question. So he had sent a little note across to the cottage, asking her to go for a drive, and intimating that if her reply was in the affirmative he would call for her at half-past ten prompt.

The groom brought back word that Miss Mona would be

quite ready when he called, and punctually at the time he pulled up at the cottage.

Miss Mona, however, was not quite ready. Some cynical people say that a lady never is quite ready when she is expected to be; that a wide margin ought always to be allowed for contingencies; that, with the best intentions in the world, it is not always possible to compass her toilette within any specified time; that if she comes within measurable distance of the hour named, that is all that should be expected.

This may be true, or it may not be. Certain it is that Mona was not ready. She did not make her appearance till the clock in the stable turret was striking eleven, and then she came out leisurely, buttoning her glove as though she had several minutes to the good. Edward would have sworn that he had waited an hour, but for the clock that was then striking; but it had seemed an hour, and he and his horse were growing terribly impatient.

"Good-morning, Edward," she said, smiling up at him in her pleasantly unconscious fashion. "Isn't it a lovely morning? Oh! excuse me a moment; I have forgotten my sunshade;" and she ran back into the cottage and was absent another four minutes.

"You seem in a very deliberate humour this morning," he said, when at length she made her appearance. "Do you know I've been waiting more than half an hour for you?"

"Oh, that is not much," she said, smiling. "Some gentlemen wait years for a lady."

"But not in a dog-cart."

"No; you are right there, Edward. But I could not get away sooner. Mother has one of her bad headaches this morning."

"I'm sorry. Can you climb up without assistance? Bess is impatient to be off."

"I'll try. But where's Job?"

"Sitting on the corn-bin, most likely, smoking. Are you afraid to trust yourself in my hands? If so, we'll drive back to the Hall and fetch him."

"Oh no, I'm not the least bit afraid! And you must teach me to drive some time."

"Teach you to drive, Mona?" and he laughed quite gaily.

"Of course you must. Such things don't come by instinct, do they?"

"I don't know. I almost think they do. Why, I could drive anything when I was nine years old; and when one has once learned to manage horses, he never forgets how."

"I did not know you had horses in Australia," she said, seating herself by his side and adjusting the rug.

"Did you think we rode camels?" he asked, giving Bess her head; "or did you imagine we had tamed the kangaroo to such uses?"

"Don't be foolish, Ted!" she replied. (Ted was her pet name for him, and which no one else used.) "You know very well what I mean."

"No, Mona," he said, with a grave smile. "You credit me with more penetration than I possess."

"Grandpa told us," she went on, after a long pause, "that you lived in a big town, and that the man who brought you up kept a little shop, and so I supposed you never had anything to do with horses till you came to England."

For a few moments his eyes caught a far-away look, as though his thoughts were back in that distant past that daily grew more dim and shadowy.

"We only came into the town a few months before I left," he answered at length. "Before that we lived right out in the Bush, miles and miles away."

"Is the Bush like our country?" she asked; "all fields, and woods, and plantations?"

"Oh no," he answered quietly. "The country in England is trim and neat, like a well-kept park; but the Bush is wild and lonely, unkempt and uncultivated. I cannot describe it to you, Mona. It is just as Nature made it—great stretches of scrub and bare hills and unbroken forests, with patches of cultivated ground here and there."

"And you lived on one of the patches, I suppose?"

"Well, yes, we did," he answered with a laugh; "and a jolly time we had of it. At least, it seems so now, as I look back upon it. Ned and I were always together, and we did pretty much as we liked."

"And got into no end of mischief?"

"Sometimes, but on the whole we managed very well."

"And was Ned a nice boy?"

"The best in the world, Mona. You would not care for me any more if he were here. I am sure you would like him. He was just splendid! Strong, courageous, frank, and generous to the very soles of his shoes."

"He's altered by this time, just as you have."

"Yes, I suppose he has," Edward answered, with a troubled look in his eyes. "He's given up writing to me. I've not heard from him for nearly two years, and my last two letters to him have been returned through the Dead Letter Office."

"Boys' friendships can't last for ever," Mona answered reflectively. "I care for very few of the girls I used to be awfully fond of."

"But Ned was no ordinary friend," was the reply. "He was more than a brother to me. He was like my other self. I shall never forget him. I don't think he will ever forget me."

"But you never talk about him."

"What is the use? Grandfather cannot bear me to mention his name. The very word 'Australia' seems to irritate him terribly. But I think none the less because I am silent."

"And you were really happy in Australia?"

"Yes, Mona; happier than I've ever been here—if I except the last month or two."

"And why do you except the last few months?"

"Just because I have found a new comrade—one to take the place of Ned; one I can talk to and confide in."

"You mean me?"

"Of course I mean you, little cousin."

"But I am not strong, and brave, and fearless, and resolute, and all that kind of thing."

"No, but you are a girl, and that counts for something."

"Does it?" she asked, looking up into his eyes honestly and fearlessly. "I thought perhaps it would count the other way."

He did not answer for several minutes. They had come out on the hill-top in sight of the sea. Westward the great Atlantic stretched into infinite distance, flecked with cloud-shadows, and dotted with thin lines of foam.

"Woa, Bess," he said, pulling up his horse and bringing her to a standstill. "Let us sniff for a moment the salt breeze fresh from thousands of miles of heaving billows. This is the best thing about Cornwall, and worth everything else put together."

"I am glad you like the sea," Mona said after a pause.

"Like it!" he answered. "Like is not the word—I love it! It gives me such a sense of space and freedom. It stirs my slow and sluggish nature. It makes me think great thoughts too big to be put into words."

Mona clapped her little hands and smiled.

"You talk like a poet," she said. "I did not know you had so much emotion in you."

"And I did not know you could be so cynical," he replied jocularly. "But get along, Bess, or we shall be late for lunch."

"Ah, you men!" Mona said with one of her quiet smiles; "directly you feel a bit hungry all your poetry goes. I really do think, in spite of all your talk, that the view you enjoy most is a well-spread table."

"When we are hungry," he replied.

"I forget hunger when I am out here by the sea," she answered. "I've sat out there on Gull Rock for hours, unconscious of everything but the glorious vision, and the wild, mournful music."

"Where is Gull Rock?" he asked.

"Just out there," she answered, pointing with her hand. "The sea is breaking over it now, for it is almost high-tide. But when the tide is out it is glorious to sit on the top and dream."

"I will try it some day," he answered, and then silence fell between them.

Their way back lay through the village of St. Aubyn, and just outside the road was almost blocked by a crowd of yelling lads.

Edward pulled up to see what the commotion might be.

Standing with her back to the wall was a young girl, of perhaps the age of Mona, though she was taller and better developed. Her head was thrown back, her hands clenched, her eyes flashing fire. At her feet was a terrified dog that seemed half dead with hunger and ill-usage. She stood partly in front of the affrighted animal, and was daring the lads to come near.

"You cowards!" she said. "I'm ashamed of you! Have

you nothing better to do than to ill-treat a poor, half-dead animal?"

"It's not your dog," yelled one of the biggest of the lads, "and you've no right to interfere."

"No right!" she exclaimed, as Edward pulled up his horse. "Will this gentleman lend me his driving-whip, and we'll soon settle the question of rights?" and she took a step toward the horse's head.

"I don't understand it," he said, flinging the reins to Mona and leaping out of the trap.

"It's this way, sir," said the spokesman of the crew: "we was playing with our own dog, and she comed along and took it away from us."

"You say it is your dog," said Edward; "how came it yours?"

"'Cause us found it," chimed in a small boy from behind, "an' it don't belong to nobody else."

"Ay, it ain't got no owner, and so it belongs to us," shouted several voices in chorus.

"And what were you doing with it?" he demanded.

"Nawthin'," was the sullen answer; "we was only playin'."

During this conversation Miss Dorothy Gray had been gently stroking the terrified animal, which still crouched at her feet. But, drawing herself up suddenly, she exclaimed, with flashing eyes:

"You call it playing when you have nearly killed the poor creature—playing, when you first tried to drown it, and afterward to stone it to death! Shame on you! Go back to your homes at once, and leave the dog with me."

"Give up the dog, and we'll go," they muttered, looking cowed and half ashamed.

Instantly Edward's hand tightened round his driving-

whip. "Go at once," he said authoritatively, "and be thankful you have got off so easily."

For a moment they looked at him in silence, then slunk away, leaving him and Dorothy face to face.

"I thank you for your interposition," she said, lifting her large, liquid eyes to his. "You came up just in the nick of time."

"Please do not mention it," he stammered in some confusion. And then he stood stock-still and saw her walk away, followed by the animal she had rescued. He wanted to say something else, but the words would not come. He always felt diffident in the presence of strange ladies, but to-day he was conscious of a sensation that he had never known before.

CHAPTER IV.

A QUEST AND ITS RESULT.

“Why dost thou try to find
Where charity doth flow?
Upon the waters cast thy bread—
Who eats it, who may know?”

GOETHE.

“Do you know who she is?” Mona asked, after they had driven some distance in silence.

“I don’t,” was the reply. “I was just about to ask the same question of you.”

“She’s quite a stranger to me,” Mona answered, with a sober look in her eyes. “I’m quite certain I’ve never seen her before.”

“And you know most of the St. Aubyn folks?”

“Yes; I know nearly everybody by sight.”

“Then she must be a stranger, Mona. You rarely forget people when you have seen them once.”

“Do you mean that as a compliment?”

“Yes, if you like to take it in that way.”

“Thank you, Ted; but I don’t think I will. By-the-by, though, you seemed awfully taken aback when she spoke to you.”

“Did I look very stupid?” he asked, colouring.

“Pretty well, though I have seen you look more so.”

"I don't know what possessed me just to stand stock-still and stare at her."

"Perhaps you were afraid. She seemed quite a young Amazon."

"She seemed quite a lady," he answered quickly.

Mona looked amused, and her soft eyes sparkled.

"It's fun to see you interested," she said, after a pause. "I began to fear some time ago that you would never get beyond books and experiments."

"I don't think I ever shall," he replied. "But it does not follow on that account that I am not interested in men and women."

"Particularly women?"

"When they are interesting."

"Then there are some interesting women?"

"A few."

"Could you name them?"

"I could name one, but I shan't; she's vain enough already, and a most outrageous little tyrant to boot."

"A tyrant, and interesting! How very funny! But suppose you drove a little faster; I'm sure we shall be late for lunch."

That afternoon, as Edward sat under the veranda with a book on his lap, he fell to dreaming. Not that the book was uninteresting or the weather drowsy. But his thoughts had been turned out of their usual channel, and his brain more or less excited; hence, try as he would, he could not keep the printed page before him. He made several attempts, but the letters and lines persisted in running into each other in the most confusing and bewildering way, and in their place a pair of large luminous eyes would look up at him, and a smile generous as summer's sunshine would quicken the beating of his heart.

In all his dreams before, the face of Mona had reigned

supreme. Day after day her influence over him had increased, and he was yielding himself without a murmur to her sweet captivity. Now a new face had come to dispute—for the moment, at any rate—her domination. The little scene of the morning interested him in a way that he could not understand. The plucky girl who had dared a yelling pack of boys excited his curiosity.

The fact that she was a stranger gave a certain piquancy to the situation. That she was not one of the village girls he was quite certain of. Mona knew everybody by sight for miles about, and he himself was growing familiar with the faces of most of the village folk. But this face he had never seen before.

But that was not all. The charm of her presence, her exceeding beauty, could not be gainsaid. He had never seen before so queenly a girl; never before listened to a voice so firm and yet so musical; never before in all his life had been moved to such sudden interest.

He shut his book at length, and rose to his feet. An amused smile was playing round the corners of his mouth, and shining in his dark, dreamy eyes.

“I really shall not have to rally Mona on her curiosity any more,” he said to himself. “I’m just as bad as she is. I’d give my best hat at this moment to know the name of that girl, and where she lives, and where she came from, and what she’s doing here, and whatever else there’s to be known about her. And what is more, I shall not be satisfied until I find out. I’ve a good mind to take a ramble down into the village this afternoon. I wonder if Mona would mind a walk? No, I’ll go alone; she’ll tease me to death if she gets to know how curious I am. Besides, if I’m to live here all my life and do my duty by these folks, it’s quite time I got to know them.”

He smiled again, good-humouredly, then threw down his

book and hurried down the terrace steps. In a few minutes he had passed the lodge gates, and was descending the hill towards Briar Nook. He did not notice the little farmstead, however, as he passed. It was down a narrow lane, and almost shut in with trees. A little beyond, the road began to rise again, steeply at first, then with a more gradual ascent; finally it wound round to the left, and St. Aubyn Churchtown came into sight.

Green Bank stood on the outskirts of the village, surrounded by several acres of land. It was a square-built, unpretentious villa, trim and well kept, and bearing on its face the stamp of substantial respectability.

He glanced up at the windows as he passed, but did not take a second look. Had he done so, his curiosity might have been rewarded. But it was not Miss Jane Pendray that he was looking for. He knew her, of course, by sight, for next to the vicar and the doctor she was the most considerable personage in St. Aubyn. But that the beautiful, defiant girl he had seen that morning could be in any way connected with demure Miss Jane never occurred to him.

In truth, his hope lay in the direction of the Vicarage, which stood at the other end of the village, and within a stone's-throw of the parish church. Mr. Rosevear had frequently visitors staying with him. He had two grown-up daughters, and they had made many friends while away at school. Doubtless the young lady he had seen was visiting them.

Having come to this conclusion, he hurried through the principal street without noticing anyone, much to the chagrin of several shopkeepers who saw him as he passed, and were very much hurt that the young Squire of Pendormic should not even look at their windows, on which they had bestowed so much pains.

The Vicarage looked deserted as he passed it. Not even

the gardener was to be seen, and he was generally in evidence. Edward slackened his pace, and looked carefully at all the windows, but no one appeared.

"Perhaps they have all gone down to the Porth," he said to himself. "It will be low-tide by now, and the sands will be splendid;" and he took two or three strides, as though he would continue his journey as far as the sea.

Then suddenly he paused and began to laugh softly to himself; finally he blushed slightly and wheeled right-about-face. In truth, he was beginning to feel a little ashamed of himself. His quest was of a character that would not bear looking at in the light of sober reason. He was glad now that he had not invited Mona to come with him, for she would have guessed his mission in a moment.

The shopkeepers were mollified on his return journey. He looked at several of the windows, and even stopped and chatted with one or two of the principal business men he met in the street. But Ezra Drake, the shoemaker, was most honoured. Not only did he go into the shop, but he passed through into the workroom, and sat talking with the cobbler for the best part of an hour.

The butcher, who lived directly opposite, declared that he was in Drake's shop exactly forty-seven minutes; but this was disputed by the grocer, who said it was only forty-five, and his watch had only just been cleaned, and was therefore likely to keep time. They ultimately agreed, however, after much wrangling, to split the difference and call it forty-six. Still, three-quarters of an hour with a man who never had paid court to Pendormic was a fact that required a good deal of explaining. Ezra Drake was regarded as the most extreme man in the parish, a man who had no respect for squire or parson, and who would not doff his hat to royalty even, supposing it should come his way; a man who hated all landlords with a most unreasonable

hatred, and who had been heard to say things about the Duke of Cornwall—who drew considerable revenues out of the county and spent nothing in it—which no respectable newspaper would print and no loyal subject would repeat.

Hence, that the young Squire of Pendormic should spend three-quarters of an hour in such a man's company created no little sensation, even while it pleased the bulk of the villagers.

"He caan't know what Ezra's said about his granfer," the butcher said to the grocer, "or he'd never cross the drexel of his door."

"Ef he do knaw," said the grocer, "he's a good deal more forgiviner than I should be."

"Well, they do zay he ain't at ole stuck up," the butcher went on, "though he's considerable reserved like in his temper. But there's nawthin' of the Trefusa 'bout 'im."

"And a good job too," snapped the grocer, "for between you and me and the gate-post the Trefusa blood is terrible mean—there now! I've zed it, an' I main it."

The butcher nodded his head sagely at this remark, and then returned to his shop to wait on a customer.

It should be said that when Edward Trefusa entered Ezra Drake's shop he had no thought of getting into conversation with the shoemaker. A mere matter of business, which he had forgotten the day before, and which the sight of Ezra's signboard recalled to his memory, turned him suddenly aside from his walk. But Ezra was not the man to let an opportunity slip. To drop a few seed-truths into the young squire's mind he regarded as a very sacred duty. He might never have another chance, and he was bound to embrace it. The Trefusas ought to know what the people thought of them. If they could see themselves as others saw them, they might amend their ways. But while the people doffed their hats, and cringed before them, the old tyranny would continue, perhaps increase.

Ezra was not in the least troubled with nervousness. He cared no more for the squire than he cared for the butcher across the way. And as for custom—well, he got none, except a bit of mending now and then ; and he would quite as soon that was taken somewhere else.

“So you are the young squire, eh?” was his greeting. “Well, I’m glad to see ’ee. Would you mind comin’ through? It’s on’y a workshop. But it won’t poison ’ee. I can find ’ee a chair too——”

“I just called——” Edward began.

“Iss, iss. I know all ’bout what you called for,” said Ezra ; “but now you be here I want a word wi’ you. Most folks be ’fraid of spaikin’ their minds to you gentry folks ; they’d just lie down for you to stank (trample) ’pon ’em. An’ cause you don’t ’ear ’em complain you think they be satisfied an’ loyal, ’an would do anything for ’ee. But let me tell ’ee tain’t so. They’d burn Pendormic ’bout your ears if they could do so ’thout bein’ found out. I know ’em, an’ what’s more, I bain’t ’fraid of spaikin’.”

“Well,” Edward said shortly, “and what is all this leading to?”

“Sit down, sir, an’ don’t be huffy,” Ezra said coolly. “He ain’t your worst friend as spaiks out above-board, an’ how be ’ee to know unless somebody tell ’ee?”

“If you have something very particular you wish to tell me,” Edward said, “I shall of course be willing to listen. Otherwise——”

“Otherwise I’m not to waste your valuable time,” interjected Ezra. “It’s wonderful how busy you gentry folks generally be.”

Edward looked at him and smiled ; the man’s cool impertinence amused him, but he did not make any further remark.

“You’ll be Squire of Pendormic some o’ these days,” Ezra went on, “ef you’ve luck.”

"If I've luck?" Edward interposed quickly.

"Exactly—if you live long enough and there ain't no revolution. But what I want to say is, Ef you don't go on different lines from your grandfer, there'll be ructions, and no small ones either. There's boiling discontent now. You don't know anything 'bout it up to Pendormic, but it's been growing for thirty years. I tell you it was a bad day for St. Aubyn when your grandfer bought the Pendormic estates."

"You think so?" Edward said shortly.

"I don't think nawthin' 'bout it; I'm sure of it. He's done little but raise rents and evict tenants ever since he came; and when leases fall in in St. Aubyn he trebles the dues. I tell you, we're so crushed with rents that there ain't a decent livin' for none of us."

"But I have nothing to do with the rents," Edward said.

"But you will have," was the reply. "You'll come in for a load o' brass some o' these days. Some of it you'd better be without, I'm thinkin'. Money as isn't honestly come by——"

"What's that! Let me not hear another word!" Edward said, the blood mounting to the roots of his hair.

"Ask anyone as knows ef you don't b'lieve me," said Ezra defiantly. "Ask any lawyer in the district how your grandfer came by Briar Nook Farm. You've never heard of the Foweyes, perhaps?"

Edward started at the mention of the name, but he did not speak.

"Old John Fowey toiled and saved for a lifetime to reclaim that farm and buy the freehold; and his son Abram slaved through all his youth, as a boy never ought to slave. Abie and I were boys together. Think I don't know what I be talking 'bout? I remember the day when the last of the mortgage was paid off. There was fine doings down to

Briar Nook—a real tea-drink. Good Lord! it seems only yesterday, though it's thirty years ago."

"Well," said Edward, feeling infinitely more interested than he cared to own, "what then?"

"What then? Well, you'd better ask your grandfer or Lawyer Whittle what then. They were hand in glove then, as they've been ever since. I don't know much about deeds and titles and sich things. Poor John Fowey had papers enoo'. Whittle seed to that. But they wer'n't of no 'count in a court of law. The case went agin him, an' he broke his heart an' died. Abie went away to Australia. Poor Abie! Nobody's ever heard of him since. I s'pose Australia is a mighty big country, ain't it?"

"Yes," Edward answered absently. "It is a very big country."

"Ay, well, young squire, I don't 'spose it's in your power to rectify the wrongs of a generation ago. But people never forget sich things, an' if you go on the same lines, there'll be trouble as sure's my name's Ezra Drake. An' it's on'y right you should know what people think an' how they feel."

"I'm not going to call your motive into question in telling me all this," Edward said. "But if the courts decided in my grandfather's favour in the case of Briar Nook Farm, I do not know why anyone should blame him."

"Sir," said Ezra, in his most impressive manner, "there be heaps of things that is law that ain't justice. Most people blame Whittle nearly as much as yer grandfer. They say that he ought to have seen to it that the papers were right and properly stamped, and what not. I don't understand it. Law is a fraud as we poor folks look at it—a game in which the longest purse wins. But you'll never convince nobody in St. Aubyn that yer grandfer and Whittle between them didn't deliberately swindle John Fowey out

of his rights; an' if they did it in the name and wi' the sanction of the law, it ain't any the honester for that."

Edward did not reply. A thousand thoughts had been awakened in his mind which surged through his brain like an angry sea.

Ezra looked at him, and was softened. His hatred of the gentry received a sudden check. The face and manner of this young squire inspired confidence. He might bear a detested name, but there was something about him that humiliated the shoemaker.

"If I've spoken offensively," he said humbly, "I ax yer pardon; I'm only a rough shoemaker. But I've vowed for years, if I ever had the chance of speaking to 'ee, I'd speak the truth, an' I've done it."

"Don't apologize," said Edward quietly. "Some day I will call again;" and he gave his hand to the shoemaker.

The shoemaker grasped it with an astonished look in his eyes, and without another word Edward passed into the street.

He had forgotten by this time the object of his quest. His brain was in a whirl. All his thoughts were back in the past. Goolong Creek, with its strangely uneventful life, came back to him as it had not done for years. The conduct of Abram Fowey revealed itself in a new light. A hundred questions crowded upon him for which he could find no answer.

He met several people in the street, but he did not see them. He passed Green Bank without looking up at the house. Had he done so, he would have seen Dorothy Gray walking in the garden. The shoemaker's story, however, had driven all thought of the strange maiden out of his mind, and for the rest of the day, and for many days after, he could think only of Abram Fowey and Ned, and the cruel wrongs they had been made to endure.

CHAPTER V.

TWO MEN AND A MAID.

“Where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.”

MILTON.

“I DON’T think I admire the young Squire of Pendomic very much, aunty,” Dorothy said that evening over the tea-table.

Miss Jane lifted her mild eyes to her niece and smiled.

“I don’t think I want you to admire him *very much*, my dear,” she said quietly.

“But you do want me to admire him, nevertheless.”

“I would like you to think well of him, for, of course, he will be the Master of Pendormic some day; and then, you know, it is never nice to think ill of one’s neighbours.”

Dorothy put down her cup and laughed. Her aunt’s line of reasoning struck her as being almost comic.

“You must remember, my dear,” Miss Jane went on, “that the Hall people are the only real gentry about the place, and it makes a good deal of difference if one can be—well, on visiting terms with them, you know.”

“I thought you had renounced the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, aunty,” Dorothy said, with a mischievous sparkle in her eyes.

"I don't call being friendly with one's neighbours either a pomp or a vanity," Miss Jane said shortly.

"Exactly; but to be friendly with people simply because they live in a big house and have a lot of money——"

" 'Simply because,' Dorothy!—I did not say any such thing," interposed Miss Jane. "But, by all accounts, Mr. Edward is a real gentleman, and it will be a great thing to have such a man to look up to."

"He does not strike me as the kind of man people will look up to," Dorothy said, after a pause. "A man wants quickness, decision, if he is to be a leader of men."

"There's something better than quickness," Miss Jane said shortly.

"And what's that, aunty?"

"Sense."

Dorothy laughed again. Her aunt was unusually sharp and aggressive this afternoon. Moreover, she appeared to resent every reflection on the young squire. Evidently social position counted for much with her, in spite of her puritanic ways.

But Dorothy was not to be silenced. She liked to be in opposition for the mere fun of it. And the more strongly Miss Jane championed Edward Trefusa, the more she felt inclined to criticise him.

"I have seen him three times to-day," she said mischievously, "and each time he's looked——"

"You've seen the young squire three times?" Miss Jane interposed quickly.

"Yes. He's passed the house twice this afternoon."

"And you never told me!"

"You were busy, aunty. Besides, the last time he passed I was in the garden, so I could not tell you very well."

"And where else have you seen him?"

"I spoke to him this morning down at Three Lane Ends——"

"You spoke to him, Dorothy?"

"Yes, aunty; why not? He helped to drive away a pack of boys who were worrying a poor dog to death, and I thanked him."

"Quite right, my dear"—Miss Jane touched her curls gently and affectionately—"and what did he say?"

"I forget now. I know he looked very stupid. I might have been an ogress, the way he simply stared at me."

Miss Jane looked troubled.

"I hope, my dear, you did not—that is——"

"I think I know how to behave," Dorothy said, anticipating what Miss Jane wanted to say. "But I am not quite certain that he does."

"My dear, you should learn to speak with respect of your—that is, of people who are in a higher social position than yourself."

Dorothy's eyes flashed a little indignantly.

"Why did you not say 'my betters' straight out?" she answered, "for that is what you meant. Really, aunt, I am surprised that you should pay court to mere money as you do. Edward Trefusa is no better than I am. That he should be the heir of Pendormic is a mere accident, and I——"

"Hush, Dorothy!" Miss Jane said, raising her hands and staring out of the window; "here comes Mr. Smith, and we've nearly finished tea. But I'm sure it can't be our week for taking the travelling preacher."

"I'm glad he's come, anyhow," Dorothy said. "He will help to brighten us up a little; and no one can deny that we need it occasionally." And she rose from the table, and went into the hall to welcome the young minister.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Smith," she said in her

bright, vivacious way. "You are just in time for tea. You will not mind that aunty and I have begun?"

"I hope I don't intrude?" Mr. Smith said, taking her hand and smiling. "I know I have no business here, but——"

"Please don't apologize; aunt will be delighted to see you, and you know there's always room for a preacher here."

"You are really very good," Mr. Smith said, his heart beating several degrees faster than normal. "You cannot imagine how pleasant it is to have such a cordial welcome."

"I've known what it is to have the other thing," she answered, turning her bright eyes full upon him. "Remember, I'm a minister's daughter." And she led the way into the dining-room.

The minister followed readily enough, feeling devoutly thankful that the illness of one of his flock rendered it impossible for him to stay at the house to which he had been appointed, and that he had been compelled as a consequence to seek hospitality at the hands of Miss Jane Pendray.

Miss Jane received Mr. Smith in her simple, stately way, and assured him that she was very pleased to see him.

"It is very kind of you to say so," he answered in his best clerical style. "But I have an explanation, nevertheless. The truth is, poor old Mrs. Treleven had a paralytic seizure last night, and as a consequence they cannot do with me at the house. So, under the circumstances, I thought perhaps you would not mind putting me up for the night."

Miss Jane lifted her hands sympathetically in a moment.

"How sad!" she exclaimed. "How very sad!"

"Yes," he said, "it is very sad." And he looked across the table at Dorothy, and felt that for him the sadness had been largely discounted.

That evening Dorothy and Miss Jane accompanied him to chapel, and, in the absence of the "organist," Dorothy played the harmonium and led the singing.

Mr. Smith fancied that he had never heard such singing before—so rich and full and melodious. Dorothy's voice was pure as a bird's. It seemed almost like an echo from another sphere, and made the young preacher think of the angels singing in paradise.

Once when he looked on her upturned face during the sermon he almost forgot the thread of his discourse. The level sunshine through a western window fell upon it, and in its light she seemed almost glorified.

Mr. Smith did not venture to look at her again. Her beauty thrilled him to the finger-tips, and drove everything else out of his mind. But when the sermon was ended, his eyes sought her face once more, and during the singing of the last hymn he saw nothing else.

They all sat up late that night at Green Bank. The minister knew all the news of the circuit, and was pleased to retail it. There were a few compensations in entertaining the "travelling preachers," and this was one of them. Life was slow at Green Bank. Every day was like every other day. The weeks grew into months, and brought no change or variety. Hence Dorothy always hailed the advent of the travelling preacher. Whether he was old or young made little difference. He brought with him a whiff of the outside world, and could talk of matters that lay outside the circle of their village life.

The next day, Mr. Smith having nothing to do till evening, when he would walk on to the village of Poldene, three miles away, and preach, Dorothy, as in duty bound, set herself to entertain him. So, after breakfast—the morning being fine—she proposed a walk along the cliffs as far as the Porth.

Mr. Smith assented with alacrity. Nothing would please him better ; indeed, nothing would please him half so much, though he did not say so in quite so many words.

Miss Jane, of course, could not accompany them. Her household arrangements needed double oversight when she had a guest to entertain.

Dorothy pressed her to leave the house and the lunch for once to the servants, and Mr. Smith almost trembled lest she should do so. Miss Jane, however, was not to be tempted from her duty, and the minister drew a sigh of relief when he discovered that her decision was final.

The morning was glorious, with a cool breeze blowing in from the sea, while the view of the coast-line from the top of the cliffs was magnificent. The minister went into ecstasies, and exhausted all his adjectives in endeavouring to voice his admiration. By-and-by they descended into the Porth, and he had to give Dorothy his hand down some steep and rocky paths. In his heart he wished all the paths were steep and rocky, for the touch of her hand thrilled him with a rapture beyond all expression.

For nearly an hour they loitered on the beach gathering sea-shells, listening to the music of the incoming tide, and occasionally talking, though, it should be said, a strange restraint crept over both of them as the morning wore away. Dorothy began to regret that she had ever come. By that keen power of intuition which in woman is almost a sixth sense, she soon discovered that Mr. Smith did not regard her merely in the light of a casual acquaintance.

He was never obtrusive either in word or action, and yet there was a look in his eyes, a tone in his voice, a ready—almost eager—deference to all her wishes, that revealed to her as clearly as could be that this big, handsome young fellow, with his clear-cut, clean-shaved face and well-poised

head, was—for the time being, at any rate—her slave, to do with as she liked.

She was not a vain girl, and yet a momentary thrill of triumph ran through her when she made this discovery. It was no small matter to have a man so handsome and so strong ready to obey her slightest wish. Had Walter Smith been a weakling, a drawling, lisping, low-browed parody of a man, the case would have been different; but he was the opposite of all this. She had known him slightly before she came to reside with her aunt. He had visited her father's "circuit" more than once, and this was the third time he had been entertained at Green Bank; but it was not until to-day that the slightest suspicion crossed her mind that he cared for her more than any other girl.

Was she pleased? That was a question she was unable to answer. After the first thrill of triumph she began to feel uncomfortable. She was not prepared yet for any tenderer look in his eyes or softer tone in his voice.

"I think we had better return now," she said after an awkward break in their conversation. "Aunt Jane is the soul of punctuality, and would not be pleased if we keep lunch waiting."

"As you will," was the reply, "though it seems early yet, and it is very delightful here, hemmed in by the great cliffs and the greater sea."

"I am sorry to drag you away," she said, with a little laugh, "especially on such prosaic grounds. But you must not forget we are at least two miles from home."

"Is it so far?" he questioned. "It did not seem half that distance; but I am at your service whenever you wish to return."

"We will go back by another path if you don't mind." And she started off alone, but he was by her side in a moment.

"Are you going to climb over that ledge of rocks?" he asked.

"It is not at all difficult," was the quick reply. "The cliff-path starts on the further side."

A few minutes later they had left the hard, yellow sand, and were making their way carefully across the rocky ledge that ran far out into the sea.

Suddenly Dorothy paused and smiled, while she faintly inclined her head. The next moment a gentleman rose to his feet, and in response to her look of recognition raised his hat, and stood quite still while she passed.

Walter Smith glanced at the stranger with something like a frown on his handsome face, then offered his hand to Dorothy, and helped her down the rocky ledge.

"Who is that gentleman?" he asked when they had reached the level sand again and were out of hearing.

"Mr. Edward Trefusa," she answered without looking at him.

"You know him?" he inquired.

"No—at least, I have never been formally introduced to him.

"He does not look a desirable acquaintance," Mr. Smith said after a pause.

"Indeed! What makes you say that?"

"I simply mean that his appearance is not prepossessing. He has a sullen, discontented face."

"I disagree with you entirely. I think he has a very noble face—a little too grave for so young a man. But I am sure there is nothing sullen about it.

"Of course, I may be mistaken," Mr. Smith hastened to say. "It was only a passing glance I got. And perhaps I am not altogether without prejudice in such a case."

"And why should you be prejudiced?" she asked, looking at him with a smile.

"Please do not misunderstand me," he said a little anxiously. "I am only speaking generally. This young man may be a saint, for all I know. But I fear, as a rule, the sons of these rich men, who have more time and money than they know how to use wisely, are not an unmixed good in a neighbourhood like this."

"You mean——"

"No," he interrupted, laughing, "I will not commit myself further. Perhaps I have said too much already."

Dorothy frowned, and a thoughtful, dreamy look came into her eyes. It was but a chance word spoken, yet, like a seed, it took instant root, and began to grow.

"Be careful," he said as they began to climb the zigzag path that led up the side of the cliff. But she did not heed him; she pursued her way up and up quite unconscious of time or place. "You must be careful," he called a second time, as the gravel slipped from under her feet.

But his words seemed only like an answer to her own thoughts. Was the presence of Edward Trefusa a danger in a quiet old-world village like St. Aubyn? Was he a danger to her? Would that grave, thoughtful face fascinate her if she saw much of it? Would those deep, earnest eyes, if they looked often into hers, steal away her heart? And if so, would that mean danger? Could any harm come of her becoming acquainted with Edward Trefusa? Could any good? Was there not a great gulf fixed between people in his position and people in hers? And yet she could not help admitting to herself that she would like to know him better; there was something in his manner that stimulated her curiosity. It would be a pleasure to pierce the mystery of those deep serious eyes. Then suddenly Mr. Smith's words broke in upon her thoughts: "You must be careful."

She started and looked round. She was halfway up the

cliff, and the rocks shelved away in a perpendicular descent close to her feet.

"Wait a moment, and let me take your hand," he said, coming close to her.

She put her hand in his without a word. It was a comfort to feel his strong grasp on that narrow ledge—a satisfaction to know that his nerve was steady if hers should fail.

"Was life like that rocky path?" she wondered. "Were there sudden dangers at every turn? Did she need someone like the young minister by her side to lean upon? And if he should offer to be her companion and protector, what answer should she make? Would it not be safer to trust in him than to walk alone?"

"You are very quiet, Miss Gray," he said at length, when they walked away together out on the level turf.

"I think I was a little frightened just now," she answered. "I did not see the danger till you spoke."

"I am glad I saw it for you."

"But isn't there danger in seeing it sometimes? Don't we walk more safely when we are unconscious of peril?"

"I don't think so."

"You may be right. No doubt you are; but it occurred to me that a vivid realization of it is to make the danger dangerous. There, I know I have expressed myself badly, but you know what I mean."

"Yes, I understand you. But I think the best way to guard against danger is to realize it clearly."

"Yes; perhaps so. You know, women cannot argue—that is, as a rule. But let us hurry, or we shall be late for lunch."

CHAPTER VI.

PROBLEMS.

“ I watch the wheels of Nature’s mazy plan,
And learn the future by the past of man.”

CAMPBELL.

MEANWHILE Edward Trefusa had seated himself once more on the rocks, and was looking dreamily out over the wide, restless sea. The appearance of Dorothy on the scene had changed for a few minutes the current of his thoughts, but, like a deflected needle, they had flown back again directly the attraction was past to what had been uppermost in his mind since the previous day.

The more he reflected on the story the shoemaker had told him, the more puzzled he felt. Abram Fowey’s conduct in the light of after-knowledge had seemed strangely perplexing, but in the light of this new fact was more puzzling than ever. During the night he had scarcely slept at all. Hour after hour he had lain awake trying to piece together the broken fragments of his Australian life. Had his foster-father ever been unkind to him? Never! On the contrary, he had always been treated with marked consideration and affection, and yet he had known during all these years that he was the grandson of his greatest enemy. If what he heard the previous day was true—and that there was a good deal of truth in it he had already satisfied himself—

then Abram Fowey's feelings towards the Trefusas should be those of intense hatred.

And yet Fowey had never hated him, never shown any resentment, never manifested the least desire for revenge. All this, in face of such facts as had come to light, was, to say the least of it, not a little strange. Moreover, in other respects there was no denying that his conduct had been singular. Why had he never revealed the secret of his birth till Mr. Carve appeared on the scene? Why had he allowed Ned and himself to grow up in the belief that they were brothers? Why, when the secret was bound to come out, did he leave Goolong Creek, and practically hide himself in a place where no one knew him or them? Why did he spell his name "Foy" in all his communications with Trefusa's solicitors, and why, before he left Australia, did he advise him to say nothing of his, Abram's, connection with Briar Nook?

The more he thought of these things, the more perplexed he felt. Had he a motive in all this, and if so, what?

Edward puzzled himself through a weary and sleepless night over these questions, but no answer was forthcoming. When he came down to breakfast he looked wretched, and felt as wretched as he looked. Peter's eyes were not so dim but he could see that the young man did not look quite himself.

"Slept badly?" he questioned, in his abrupt way, standing at the sideboard, and helping himself to stewed kidneys.

"I'm not certain that I have slept at all," was the answer. "I've been tossing about all the night."

"Too much in the library and too little out of doors," the old man muttered, half to himself.

"I was out of doors nearly all the day yesterday," Edward answered. "I took Mona for a drive in the morning, and went for a walk in the afternoon."

"Good! Take her for another drive to-day. There's nothing like fresh air to bring sleep."

"Mona doesn't want to be driven out every day. She has plenty of places to go to on her own account."

"And doesn't want to be bothered with you, eh?"

"Perhaps so, though she has not told me yet that she is tired of my company."

"Perhaps you are tired of hers?"

"Not in the least; on the contrary, I like to be with her very much."

"Why?" and Peter lifted his eyes suddenly, with a keen, penetrating glance.

Edward laughed a little nervously.

"Oh, well," he replied, "for one thing, she does not irritate me."

"Not irritate you, eh? That's good," and Peter chuckled. "She soon will, though, if she's like other women!" and he chuckled again. "Women, as a rule, are as bad as a blister, and the longer they stick to you the worse they become. You don't feel 'em at first. No more do you a blister. Just warm and comfortable and almost pleasant. But later on! Good heavens! Talk about 'coals of fire,' they ain't in it."

"One would think grandmother treated you badly, by the way you talk," Edward said, with a touch of scorn in his voice.

"That page is closed, boy," Peter said, after a pause. "I'm not the one to rake up bygones if I can help it. But there's been no second Mrs. Peter, and there never will be."

A sharp reply was on Edward's tongue, but he shut his teeth tightly for a moment, then went on with his breakfast.

After a few minutes Peter looked up again, and said abruptly:

"I reckon Mona is as good as they make 'em."

"You think so?"

"Ay. As you say, she doesn't irritate, and that's a great thing. She ain't the sort to rule; she's too gentle and yielding. But as wives go, she'll be one of the best."

Edward was silent. The conversation had taken a turn he did not care for. It was unpleasant to hear Mona discussed, even by her grandfather. But Peter was not to be silenced when he had made up his mind to talk.

"I suppose, like the rest of the young men, thou'lt want to get married some of these days?" he questioned.

"I've not thought about it yet," was the reply.

"But thou soon wilt. It's human nature, I suppose, and I shall not be sorry to see thee settled. Settled—a very appropriate word!" and he smiled grimly. "I'm getting old, and these fixings need to be looked after."

"I don't think there's any hurry," Edward said shortly.

"Perhaps not—perhaps not; but you and Mona have been a good deal together lately, and you own that you like her."

"Yes; I like her very much."

"I'm very glad. I've been afraid some tartar might hook thee, for, believe me, boy, nine out of every ten women are tartars at bottom, and it is the nature of youths to favour the vixens. It is, by Heaven! I did myself when I was young. I liked 'go' in a gal. But 'go' in a gal is the devil in a wife!"

Edward rose from the table. The old man's talk jarred on his nerves like a false note in music.

"Don't be in such a hurry," Peter said peevishly. "Sit thee down, and let's talk a bit. I'm serious in what I'm saying."

"I do not doubt it; but my head aches, and I want to get into the open air."

"Five minutes more or less will make no difference, and

now I'm on the track I'd like to tell thee that it would please me very much if thou and Mona could make it up. She's a girl in a thousand, and if thou dost not hook her, some other fellow will be running off with her under thy very nose."

"There's risk in everything," Edward said, with a laugh, "and I must take my chance;" but the old man's words stuck in his memory. nevertheless, and would not be rooted out.

"Bess is at the door, sir," said the butler, entering the room at the moment.

"Quite right; thanks."

"Going for a ride?" Peter questioned.

"Yes; I want something to blow the cobwebs away;" and the next moment he was gone.

An hour later he left Bess at the little inn, patronized chiefly by farmers and trippers who come down to the Porth for sand and pleasure, and wandered out towards the reef that pushed its jagged length far into the sea. Climbing to one of the highest points, he sat down in the breeze and the sunshine, and wrestled with the questions that had buffeted him for so many hours.

The appearance of Dorothy upon the scene startled him for a moment, and as he watched her cross the reef, a thrill of admiration ran through him. He scarcely noticed her companion. Dorothy's queenly beauty claimed both his eyes. But when she had disappeared, Abram Fowey's face came up before him once more, and all the old questions came back again like screaming gulls round a cliff when storms sweep the main.

If Abram Fowey had been an evil, unprincipled, revengeful man, Edward would have reached a conclusion quickly, and riddled out an explanation that would have filled him with alarm. But Abram was not an evil man, and so the

scheme of revenge that tormented and almost maddened him for so many years never crossed the young man's mind. It needed someone else to make that suggestion, and that someone was not far off.

But while Abram was not an evil man, neither, on the other hand, was he a saint. At any rate, he never made any profession of religion, or pretended to rule his conduct by the Christian standard. Yet had he not succoured the son of his greatest enemy when he lay dying, and cared for his grandson as though the lad were his own? But was it natural that a man who paid no allegiance to Christ should act in so Christ-like a way?

Truly the problem was hedged in with difficulties. He could not believe evil of Abram, and yet so much good from such a source seemed most unnatural.

The cool sea breeze, together with the deep undertone of the distant breakers, soothed him after awhile, and he turned his eyes from the flecked and restless blue to the cliffs up which Dorothy and her companion were climbing.

He could see them very distinctly from where he sat; indeed, they seemed scarcely more than a stone's-throw away.

"It's risky to climb so steep a cliff," he muttered to himself. "But I suppose a girl like that knows no fear. What a magnificent creature she is!" and he shaded his eyes with his hand, for the sun was in that direction.

From where he sat the path looked much more steep and dangerous than it really was. What seemed to him but the narrowest ledge was in reality two or three feet wide. Consequently he grew apprehensive without reason. He started to his feet at length with a sudden exclamation, and waited with clenched hands until the two figures had disappeared over the brow of the cliff.

"I wonder who she is?" he said half aloud; then with a

smile added, "If she were a plain girl, I suppose I should not feel the slightest interest in her; but because Nature has given her a fine face and figure I'm full of curiosity." And he turned his face toward the bay and began to retrace his steps.

By the end of the week he had arrived at one or two heroic resolutions respecting what he would do when he came into possession of the Pendormic estates, and with these he had to satisfy himself until such time as he could carry them into effect.

But his interest in Dorothy increased rather than diminished. He went into St. Aubyn at least once every day, and spent considerable time talking to the village shopkeepers, much to their delight, but by no means to his own satisfaction, for Dorothy kept persistently out of sight, and he had not courage enough to make inquiries that would lead to her discovery.

Nearly every day from her window Dorothy saw him pass, and wondered what interest he could have in the village; wondered, too, why she should take so much interest in his movements. Was it simply that he was the heir of Pendormic—that in a few years he would be owner of most of the parish? Or was there something else that she could not explain or define—some latent affinity, some subtle psychic force which baffled every attempt at analysis, or even discovery?

That she was interested in this grave-faced, earnest-eyed young man she could not deny, and she was fain to believe that her interest was not in any way connected with the fact that he was the young squire of the parish. She said to herself that he was altogether unlike the ordinary, average young man; that there was a dignity in his bearing and an unrevealed something in his eyes that excited her curiosity. She wished sometimes that she could get to know him, that

some chance circumstance would throw them together. It would be an interesting occupation to find out what was behind that calm exterior—to probe the depths of his thought and character.

At other times she felt thankful that they were strangers to each other, and were likely to remain so, and was almost angry with herself that she had permitted him to occupy any place in her thoughts.

Walter Smith's chance word came back to her again and again, and she began to see clearly enough how possible it was for such a young man, with time and wealth at his disposal, to be a very real danger in such a quiet neighbourhood.

Dorothy was not unconscious of the fact that her face made a fair picture. She could not look at herself in the glass without a little thrill of satisfaction, and it was not an impossible thing that her face might attract Edward Trefusa as it had attracted Walter Smith. But with what different intentions would the two men seek her smiles!

Her thoughts were running on these lines on the following Sunday morning. She had just returned from chapel, and on going to the window, after laying aside her hat and parasol, she saw Edward Trefusa and his cousin Mona walking home together from church. They seemed both of them in the best of humours. Her eyes sparkled with merriment as they looked up into his grave handsome face, while he was more animated than Dorothy had ever seen him before.

"I should like to know him," she said to herself, as if moved by a sudden impulse. The next moment she stepped back from the window, while a hot blush swept over her face. "What a foolish girl I am!" she muttered, clenching her hands. "No good could ever come of knowing such a man. I wish I had never seen him. Walter Smith, with

his simple uprightness, is worth a hundred of him ;” and with this deliverance she hurried downstairs to the drawing-room.

Meanwhile, Edward Trefusa was wending his way towards Pendormic in the best of spirits, notwithstanding a previous disappointment. He had gone to church early that morning, so that he might watch from their family pew the people as they came into church. The weather being so fine, he assumed that everybody who was anybody would be at church that morning, and so concluded that he was almost certain to see the fair stranger, and perhaps get to know who she was.

He was considerably disappointed, therefore, when Dorothy did not make her appearance. Fortunately for him, Mona arrived soon after the service commenced, and in the company of his fair cousin he soon forgot his disappointment.

It should be said that he paid much more attention to Mona than he did to the sermon, and was far more interested in her latest millinery achievement (for Mona had a fancy for making her own hats) than he was in the parson’s climaxes, or even in his final peroration.

Mona was very grave, even solemn, all the morning, and did not take the least notice of her cousin. During the whole of the sermon she never once took her eyes off the preacher. It was in vain Edward threw constant glances at her ; she would not heed him. As demure as a little saint she sat, and a hundred times prettier than most of them.

But directly she got out of church she turned upon him.

“ You are a nice cousin,” she said, “ to leave me to come to church alone !”

“ My dear Mona——” he began.

“ No, don’t ‘ dear me,’ please, till you have apologized !”

she said with a pretended pout and an assumption of anger she did not feel.

"I apologize profusely and indiscriminately," he said, his grave face breaking into smiles.

"I believe you ; it is just like you. Now, I presume, you will let me walk home alone."

"Is not Job here with the brougham?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Did you walk here?"

"Of course I did. Did you imagine I could fly?"

"And are you not tired?"

"Of sitting still—yes. Now I want a walk."

"Shall we go through the village, and round by Briar Nook?"

"Any way, Ted ; only let us not stand chattering here."

So they walked away through the village together—a very handsome couple, people said. And the gossips curtsied and giggled as they passed, and prophesied a wedding before the world was very much older.

Edward thought his cousin never looked so charming as she did that morning. Her sweet, soft eyes reflected the sunshine, and her cheeks caught the bloom of the flowers, and her hair looked like gold in the light. She was not queenly like the stranger he had twice seen during the week, but she was pretty—ay, more, she was lovely and genuine and unaffected.

For a few minutes he was silent, as the recollection of the conversation he had had with his grandfather came back to him. Perhaps he could not do better than woo Mona in earnest, and make her his wife ; it would keep his thoughts from straying after strangers. When a man was married, in the language of Peter, he was settled. And he would be twenty-one in a few weeks now ; and Mona—well, Mona

was nineteen, and a fairer maiden for a wife no man could desire.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, they drew near the lane that led down to Briar Nook. Suddenly a strange man turned the corner, and, casting a quick and apprehensive glance at Edward, hurried quickly past, as though not wishing to be noticed.

Instantly Edward turned and looked after him. There was something in his movements, in his appearance, in the gleam of his small gray eyes, that struck him as being familiar.

“Do you know that man, Mona?” he asked quickly.

“Why, no, Ted. Do you think I know everybody?”

“I don’t think he’s a native,” he said reflectively; “and yet I have a feeling that I’ve seen him before. There’s something about him that reminds me of somebody or some place, and yet I cannot think what or who.”

“Ridden opposite him somewhere in a train, I expect,” Mona said with a laugh.

“Very likely you are right, Mona. How trifles worry us sometimes, don’t they?”

It was not a trifle, however, in this case. The presence of this stranger was a momentous event, and was fraught with far greater issues than anyone could have foreseen.

CHAPTER VII.

ROMANCE AND REALITY.

“ I cannot love thee as I ought,
For love reflects the thing beloved ;
My words are only words, and move
Upon the topmost froth of thought.”

TENNYSON.

THE stranger did not turn to have a second look at Edward Trefusa. He evidently had no wish to be further scrutinized by the searching eyes of the young squire. Keeping his head well forward, he walked rapidly up the hill, and had soon turned the corner toward St. Aubyn. On reaching the King's Arms, the door of which stood invitingly open, he turned quickly and entered.

The landlord met him in the hall and smiled pleasantly. His stranger guest, who had arrived the previous afternoon, was not of the stingy sort, and seemed well able to pay for what he got.

“ Well, Mr. Spear, and how d'ee like our vicar ? ” was the landlord's greeting.

“ Well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Treloggas,” Spear answered, “ I've not been to church.”

“ No ? I thowt you had. Been to chapel, p'raps ? ”

“ Nor to chapel either.”

“ Oah ! Well, this be a free country, an' a man can go where he do like to.”

"Just so ; and the weather being so fine, and having no time to waste, I thought I would just take a look round the neighbourhood."

"Exactly. An' let me tell 'ee, Mr. Spear, our neighbourhood will bear looking at."

"Yes ; it is very pretty indeed, delightfully pretty But it strikes a stranger as being very quiet."

"Quiet, Mr. Spear? Quiet?" and David Treloggas smiled on his guest pityingly. "Oah, Mr. Spear, you doan't know St. Aubyn if you do say 'tes quiet! Oh dear, bless 'ee, sur, you should see it Faist times ; you wouldn't say 'twas quiet then. Why, you'll 'ardly b'leeve me, p'raps, but we give up three oal days to faygerrys. We have wrastling and donkey-races on the Monday, sheep-shearing and the passon's tay-drink on the Tuesday, an' on Wednesdays the Methodys 'ave their big do. Brass band an' procession your hunderd strong. An' as for standings, shows, and them things, there's no getting about for 'em. Why, waun Faist we had a wild-beast show an' a circus here both at the same time. It was a do, I can tell 'ee ; I never seed so many people at waun time afore. You talk about bein' quiet. Oh, lor, Mr. Spear, you don't know us!"

"But your Feast only comes once a year," Mr. Spear remarked.

"Oah, but we've got Easter Fair in the spring. It ain't as busy a time as the Faist, an' it don't only last waun day, but 'tes 'a terrible lively time while it do last : and then there be a monthly cattle-show down to Penzugla Road, close to the station. That don't make much defference to St. Aubyn, 'tes true, but 'tes all in the neighbourhood, don't 'ee see."

"I see," Spear answered, with a smile. "It is evident one must know a neighbourhood before he can pass an opinion."

"That is so, sur. An' it's my opinion that more gentry would settle down here ef they did knaw what a terrible nice place 'twas. Two miles from the railway, and two miles from the sea—what could be handier?"

"Certainly the place is well situated in that respect. And I presume some nice people live here?"

"Nice? Oah, well, sur, it be like other places in that matter, I reckon. It takes oal sorts to make a world, you knaw. The squire, I must say, ain't no great shakes. Near he es—terrible near. Nobody don't care for 'im. He bought Pendormic thirty years ago, an' it were a bad day for St. Aubyn when he did."

"But there's a young squire, I think I've heard?" Spear questioned.

"That's so. An' some people do spaik well of 'im. But he don't patronize the King's Arms. He ain't like his uncle Tom; but he got drowned, you see—worse luck to it! But young Mr. Edward is bookish, they do zay, an' goes to church."

"His uncle did not go to church, I presume?" Spear questioned.

"Not he. Nor his gran'father neither. Passons weren't nawthing in their way."

"And what does this young squire do?" Spear asked.

"Oah, nawthing much. You see, he ain't been home from college long. But I b'leeve he's getting to knaw the tenants, an' interesting hisself about things generally. You see, he'll be coming of age soon, an' then I'm told he's likely to 'ave things more his own way."

Spear's small eyes grew perceptibly smaller, and for a moment or two he remained silent.

"I suppose he'll be very rich when the old man dies?" he questioned at length, with an air of unconcern.

"Oh, ay. Old Peter's bought up all the land he could

lay hands on—that is, when he could not get it without buyin’.”

“Which would be never, I presume?”

“Well,” the landlord answered reflectively, “there may be two opinions on that score, or there may be only waun. Most people think that he an’ Lawyer Whittle atween them cheated old John Fowey and his son Abram out of Briar Nook about as clean as two rogues could do it.”

“Indeed!”

“It’s an old story now,” Treloggas went on, “an’ most folks have forgot it; but not all. I reckon Kitty Treleven ain’t forgot it.”

“Who’s she?” Spear asked indifferently.

“Oh, she’s the daughter of a farmer ’bout here. Thirty years ago Kitty was the prettiest maid in the parish. Ay, an’ she’s purty now, though she must be beatin’ on for fifty. Well, she an’ Abram Fowey, as I was a-speakin’ of, were courtin’, an’ I believe they was terrible fond of each other. Howsomever, old Peter collared Briar Nook Farm, which killed old John, an’ left Abram wi’ nothing but his farm stock and furniture. Well, that was a finisher. Kitty’s father wouldn’t let her marry Abram now that he had nothing, an’ he, poor lad! went away to Australia, or somewhere. That’s thirty years ago, an’ Kitty’s waited for him ever since. She’d never look at no other man.”

“Quite a little romance,” Spear said, with an air of unconcern.

“Ay, to a stranger like you it waan’t be of no interest, but folks hereabouts talk of it still. Many people thought Abram would get his revenge on old Peter in some way, for he was a dogged, determined young fella, was Abram. But he seems to have took it very quiet. Very likely he’s dead and buried by this. Thirty years, Mr. Spears, makes a big hole in a lifetime. But there goes the bell for dinner!

Ef you bain't going to church or chapel this evenin', I don't mind takin' 'ee 'bout a bit an' showing of 'ee the sights."

"Thank you ; I should like to see Pendormic, if that's at all possible."

"Leave it to me, Mr. Spear, an' I'll take 'ee through the park, an' it'll be a pleasure to do it. Now, this way, sur ;" and Mr. Treloggas led the way to the room where the dinner was served.

Later in the day, when the sun was getting low in the west, and a sweet, cool breeze stirred all the leaves to music, Edward and Mona, who were walking together in the park, came a second time face to face with Mr. Spear, who was accompanied this time by the landlord of the King's Arms and one of the gardeners. Edward started and almost stood still, while Spear at the same moment was seized with a violent fit of sneezing, which gave him the opportunity of hiding the larger portion of his face behind the ample folds of a large crimson pocket-handkerchief.

"It's very curious," Edward said to Mona, when the three men had passèd, "that I am unable to localize that face. Those small gray eyes of his have impressed me somewhere else, but how or when or where, I cannot think for the life of me."

"It does not strike me as a subject worth troubling about," Mona said quietly.

"Very likely not, so we will not discuss it. Suppose we talk about this morning's sermon, which would be quite an appropriate theme for a Sunday evening."

"Appropriate, but not interesting," Mona said, with a silvery laugh. "Suppose we walk as far as Polmewan Farm to inquire after poor old Mrs. Treleven, which will be much more charitable."

"I will accompany you with pleasure if you wish to go,"

he answered. "I fear visiting the sick is not much in my line."

"It will please them to know we have not forgotten them, and it will be a pleasant walk for us," Mona answered. "Besides, it's always a pleasure to talk to Kitty Treleven. She is one of the sweetest women I know."

"I don't think I remember her," Edward answered. "Where is their pew in church?"

"Oh, they are all chapel people. They only come to church on Good Fridays and Christmas Days."

"I've half a mind to go to chapel myself some of these days," Edward answered. "As far as I can see, most of the people are Methodists."

"It would please them awfully if you would," Mona answered, smiling up at him. "I used often to go with nurse when I was a little girl. You should hear them sing. It's enough to raise the roof at times."

"I suppose we are too late for service to-night?" he questioned.

"Oh yes, much too late. Besides, did you not promise to walk with me to Polmewan Farm?"

"I believe I did," he answered, with a laugh; "and you promised me a sight of some pretty woman."

"Don't laugh, Ted," Mona said gravely. "You think, perhaps, that Kitty is a prudish old maid, who never smiles, and who lectures young men on smoking."

"On my word——"

"Well, she's nothing of the sort. She's just a sweet, womanly woman. She's had her romance, too. I think that interested me in her first. Mother told me all about it."

"Do tell me, Mona; I'm always interested in romances. I believe I've a little one of my own."

"Get away, Ted. I don't believe you've a particle of romance in your nature."

"I have, though. I'll tell you about it some day. But just at present I want to hear about your friend, Kitty Treleven."

"Don't be cynical, Ted."

"I'm not cynical in the least," he answered. "I'm quite serious."

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Then I'll tell you. You know Briar Nook? Lovely little place, isn't it? I should like to live there myself. Well, years ago a young farmer lived there called Abram something—I've forgotten his other name. Well, he and Kitty were engaged, and were going to be married; then he lost all his money, I don't know how, and after that Kitty's parents wouldn't let her see him. They sent her away to Plymouth or somewhere. She was only about eighteen, and the prettiest girl in the parish, report says. Well, they kept her away, and told Abram that she did not want to see him or hear from him any more. And, poor fellow! he never did see her again or hear from her. He went away to Australia, and has never come back again. Kitty's parents wanted her to marry some rich farmer, but she never would. She has remained true to her first love. Don't you think she has been very brave? I look upon her as quite a heroine!"

Mona waited for her companion to reply, but he walked on by her side with an absent look in his eyes, as though he had not heard a word she said. His thoughts were back again at Goolong Creek, and his heart was with the man who had suffered such cruel wrong from the man he called his grandfather.

"I wonder he did not hate the sight of me," he said to himself. "My presence must have been a constant torture to him, a perpetual reminder of all that he has lost. If

Kitty Treleven is a heroine, Abram Fowey is no less a hero. Oh! I wish I could make him some recompense for the wrong my grandfather did. And some day I will. God helping me, I will."

Mona glanced up at him now and then, but decided to waste no further words on one who paid so little heed. He did not notice her silence. All the old questions that had buffeted him earlier in the week began to torment him again. For the rest of the way he was oblivious to everything else. He was unconscious even of Mona's presence.

Suddenly he was brought back to himself by the click of a gate and the presence of a third person on the scene, and before he could recover himself, he heard Mona saying:

"My cousin and I have walked across to inquire after your mother. I hope she is better."

Edward raised his hat and looked at the woman before him, and in a moment his own judgment had confirmed all that Mona had said.

"She is a little better, thank you, though still quite helpless." And the voice was as musical as the face was sweet.

"Can it be possible," Edward thought, "that this woman is nearer fifty than forty?" Her brown abundant hair was still untouched by time; her eyes were as clear as a girl's, her cheeks nearly as smooth; she was still slender and graceful and winsome—a woman that even a young man might love.

"She does not appear to have fretted much for her old sweetheart," Edward said, on their way back to Pendormic.

"Appearances go for nothing," was the quiet reply. "At any rate, she has never given her love to another."

"I wonder if she cares for him still?" he said musingly.

Mona looked up at him, but did not reply, and for a long distance they walked in silence.

Edward was the first to speak. "I wonder if people always marry those they love best?" he said, as if thinking aloud.

Mona glanced up at him and smiled, then answered quietly, "Not in every case, I should think."

For a moment or two he looked at her with his large, questioning eyes. How pretty she was—how gentle and confiding! Should he ever love another better, he wondered, or even so well? and if he let her slip, in the anticipation of some more passionate devotion, might he not suffer life-long regret and disappointment?

The summer evening was deepening quietly around them. The shadows were growing dense under all the trees. The wind had died away into absolute stillness. The birds had hushed their Sabbath songs. It was the hour when lovers dream, and sentiment is allowed its fullest play.

Mona's hand lay lightly upon his arm, her eyes were looking confidingly into his. Never before had she seemed so near to him or so dear. Never before had his heart gone out to her so fully.

"Mona," he said gently.

"Yes, Edward."

"Could not we be happy together, think you, as man and wife?"

She drew her hand from his arm in a moment. "Oh, Edward, what a question!" and the warm blood dyed deeply her neck and face, then left her deathly pale.

"We care for each other," he said, in the same quiet tones. "At least, I care for you very much. And it is grandfather's wish."

"But merely caring for me is not enough, is it?" she asked, with the sweetest smile.

"But I love you, Mona."

"As a brother loves a sister, Ted; that is all, I think."

"I never had a sister, Mona; but I know you have become necessary to me, somehow. Don't you think, little girl, we might make it up?"

"I think we could be happy together, Ted," she answered prettily. "But it would be better to think a little more about it first."

"I don't want to coerce you, little girl," he said, looking down at her very tenderly.

"You know, Ted, I am very fond of you," she said confidently. "But may not love be something very different? We are only young yet. And if you will have my Yes, it need not be till your birthday."

"That is as good as a promise," he said. And he bent down and kissed her on the forehead.

"Is this your little romance, Ted?" she asked sweetly.

"Yes, Mona. Do you like it?"

"I must think about it first."

And for answer he kissed her again.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COURSE OF LOVE.

“Love strikes one hour—love. Those never loved
Who dream that they loved once.”

E. B. BROWNING.

MR. SPEAR and the landlord of the King's Arms had a long conversation that evening. It was not often that David Treloggas had such a good listener, and he made the most of his opportunity. Before the stranger retired to bed he knew almost as much about St. Aubyn and its people as the landlord himself.

Mr. Spear was quite early astir next morning. He was anxious to get “the first train up,” he said, though he gave no hint of his destination. David Treloggas fell to musing when his guest had left, and for the first time it struck him as singular that the stranger had said nothing about himself.

“He's got everything out of me,” he mused, and scratched his head as he did so; “but blow me if I've got anything out of him—not a single blessed thing!” and he shifted his position and looked uneasy.

“I hope I did not take too much last night,” he went on. “Susan always says when the drink's in, with me, the wit's out; and I know my tongue goes sometimes like the clacker of a mill. I wish I'd axed more questions and

answered fewer. And yet he did not seem perticler interested, either. I wonder who he es. Not a commercial, 'tis sartin; not a gent; not a workin' man exactly. Blowed ef he ain't a puzzle, and I'm haaf a fool!"

Meanwhile, the stranger was making his way slowly in the direction of Penzugla Road railway-station. He had allowed himself plenty of time to get his train, so there was no occasion for hurry. He did not look in an altogether satisfactory humour. As a matter of fact, he indulged in much bad language under his breath. He had acquired a good deal of information during his visit to St. Aubyn, but none of it seemed to be of any particular value.

At a bend in the road where Pendormic Hall came into view, he paused for several minutes.

"I think I'm all right," he muttered; "but the fruit isn't quite ripe yet. I'll have to wait till after the birthday, anyhow. There's no getting feathers off a plucked bird. But, curse it! if that old fool would only die, as he ought to have done years ago, I should have all the trump cards in my hands. These years of waiting are above a joke, but I mustn't spoil the game now by showing my hand too early;" and, turning his back on the Hall, he continued his way towards the station.

During the next week or two nothing happened to disturb the peace and serenity of St. Aubyn and neighbourhood. Edward, in the joy of conscious possession, fancied that Pendormic was an earthly paradise. He was not boisterously happy. His passion was not of the all-consuming kind. He was not miserable when Mona was out of sight. What he was most conscious of was a certain sense of dignity which he had never felt before. To have someone to counsel, to protect, to love, someone who would look up to him and lean upon him, gave to him a delicious feeling

of responsibility. It was as though his manhood had suddenly leaped into life. He had been a mere youth till now, without any recognised position, without responsibility.

But that conversation with Mona in the quiet of the Sabbath evening had changed everything. He had used the words "husband" and "wife," and she had looked confidingly into his eyes and locked her hands across his arm.

He was a youth no longer. He had reached the full stature of a man.

This feeling of elation lasted several days. He sat an inch or two taller when he took Mona for a drive. He ventured even to suggest what she should wear, and was painfully anxious that she should be protected against any changes in the weather.

Once, when Mona thought he was needlessly fussy, she ventured to remonstrate with him.

"You know, Ted, we are not engaged yet," she said.

"Practically we are," he replied, with dignity.

She laughed a little at his consequential air, though she admitted to herself that it was very pleasant to be made a fuss of, and that to have someone she could order about, and who would be her protector at the same time, was an experience not to be despised.

During those pleasant days Edward did not trouble about the stranger who had twice crossed his path, nor did he take any more rambles into St. Aubyn in the hope of catching a glimpse of Dorothy Grey. The sense of possession, so new and so sweet, filled all his life for the moment, and Dorothy's beautiful face ceased to haunt him.

Peter, with his keen eyes, soon discovered how matters stood between Edward and Mona, and he grunted complacently. It was just what he desired. He had long been exercised in his mind as to what proportion of his

property should go to his grand-daughter; he hated the thought of splitting up the estate. He had schemed, and lied, and saved for thirty years to make Pendormic what it was, and he desired above everything else that it should remain intact when he was under the turf.

If Edward and Mona got married, his anxiety on that score would be at an end; and, in order to prevent any possible slip, he announced the engagement before any engagement had taken place. Edward was considerably surprised when he saw in the *West Briton* on the following Saturday an announcement to the effect that he had entered into a matrimonial engagement with his cousin.

"Have you seen this?" he asked of the old man across the table.

"Yes; did you put it in?"

Edward started, and stared at his grandfather.

"I should not think of doing such a thing," he replied; "besides, it isn't true."

"I thought myself it was rather premature," the old man answered.

"Premature! I should think so! I wonder what busy-body can have sent it."

"Not the remotest idea," was the innocent reply. "Very likely some penny-a-liner has made a guess at it."

"It's very annoying," Edward said reflectively.

"I'd write a letter, if I were you, contradicting it," Peter replied, without looking up.

"Would you?" was the quick reply.

"Most certainly I would. If there's no engagement between you, and there ain't going to be, it ought to be contradicted; and the sooner the better."

"Oh, well, you see," Edward said uneasily, "there is really an understanding between us."

"Oh, there is, is there?"

"But only since last Sunday. We never talked of the matter before, and even now there is no formal engagement, as you must know. Mona thinks we ought to wait at least till my birthday."

"Hem! Then, the newspaper report has only anticipated matters a little?"

"Strictly speaking, that is so."

"I see. That alters the complexion of things a little. To write contradicting the report might complicate matters. Better, perhaps, under the circumstances, to say nothing about it."

"And let people assume that we are engaged when we are not?"

"You'll have to anticipate your birthday, that's all."

"You mean that I had better get Mona's consent to a formal engagement at once?"

"You can put it in that way if you like. It all comes to the same thing in the end."

"Perhaps so," was the hesitating reply. "At any rate, I will think about it."

Directly after breakfast Edward put on his hat and strolled across the park in the direction of the cottage. Mona was in the garden gathering flowers for table decoration and for her mother's room. Edward could not help thinking that she looked just as sweet and fresh as the flowers that were growing around her. She had on a simple cotton gown that became her immensely. A sailor-hat was perched lightly on her sunny hair; a bow of bright ribbon at her throat was the only attempt at adornment.

At the garden-gate Edward paused for a moment or two and looked at her. Her presence made the picture complete. She filled her surroundings perfectly. In a brilliant assembly of fair women she might pass unnoticed, or even look out of place. But here, in an old garden, with a back-

ground of ivy-covered walls, she looked an essential part of the picture.

Directly she heard the click of the garden-gate she turned round, and, seeing who her visitor was, came at once to meet him.

His heart beat just a little faster when he caught the light of welcome in her eyes, and saw her sweet, pretty face light up with smiles.

"You are early this morning, Ted," she said, in the most unaffected way. "What has brought you this way so soon?"

"I came to see you, Mona," he answered, taking her proffered hand and holding it for a moment or two.

"Want me to do something for you?" she questioned.

"Not exactly. But I have something in my pocket I want you to see—unless you have seen it already," he added, after a pause.

He noticed the questioning look that came in a moment into her eyes, and hastened to explain.

"You don't take the *West Briton*, I think?" he said.

"I'm sure I don't know," she answered gaily. "I rarely read the newspapers; they are such stupid things."

"I want you to read this, at any rate," he said, pulling the paper out of his pocket and pointing to the paragraph.

She read it at a glance, and a warm blush ran swiftly up her face.

"Oh, Ted," she said, "who can have done it?"

"I haven't the remotest idea," he answered.

For a moment she was silent; then, laying her hand timidly on his arm, and looking earnestly into his face, she said:

"Will you let it go forth without contradiction?"

"I hardly know what to do," he said, in some little confusion, "and so I came across for your advice."

"Do you wish it contradicted, Ted?" she asked naïvely.

"Of course I don't, Mona," he said stoutly, his native gallantry coming at once to his rescue. "Only, you know, we are not formally engaged yet, and so you are really the proper person to decide whether it shall stand or not."

"Oh, indeed. So you will throw the responsibility on me, will you?" and her words ended in a little ripple of laughter.

"Please don't put it in that way, Mona," he said seriously. "What I mean is, if you don't mind, I will take no notice of the paragraph."

"You really don't mind yourself?" she questioned, looking with an absent expression in her eyes across the distant landscape.

"Mind?" he questioned; "why should I mind, Mona? I told you last Sunday evening what was in my heart. Do you think I have changed since then?"

"Oh no, Ted; I do not think so for a moment."

"Then, we are engaged properly?" he questioned, and he took both her hands in his, and looked earnestly into her sweet, confiding eyes.

"If you wish it so, Ted," she answered, blushing very sweetly.

He looked swiftly around. No window overlooked them, no one was near.

"I do wish it, Mona," he said; and he bent down and kissed her very tenderly and reverently.

There was no passion in their love-making. It had all come round in a very unromantic, not to say prosaic, way. They had known each other for years; they had scarcely known anyone else; they mixed very little in society, and for the last few months they had been constantly in each other's company. Hence, if the element of romance was

absent from their love-making, it was not to be wondered at. They had liked each other from the beginning of their acquaintance.

"I wonder what mother will say?" Mona said at length. "She will have no suspicion, I am sure, for she thinks I am only a child."

"I don't think she will be displeased," Edward said with a laugh; "and I know grandfather will be delighted."

"It will be funny if there's no opposition from any quarter. For you know the old saying, that the course of true love never did run smooth."

"I don't trouble about old sayings," he answered.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, smiling up into his face. "If there's no hitch anywhere, I shall begin to wonder if ours is true love at all."

"What a notion, Mona! I think we had better go and see your mother, and have that part of the business off our minds."

"I think so, too; but I shall leave it all to you;" and she ran blushing down the garden path and into the house.

Mrs. Tom Trefusa, a somewhat faded, though still pretty woman, was reclining on a large couch in the drawing-room. She spent most of her time on the couch, fancying herself an invalid.

Mona waited in the hall till Edward came up to her; then, leading the way into the drawing-room, she said abruptly, "Here's Ted, mother; he's something he wants to tell you," and instantly turned and left the room.

Edward tried to intercept her before she reached the door, but he was not quick enough. He caught her merry laugh as the door banged, and then he heard her bounding up the stairs.

"Good gracious! what ails the child?" Mrs. Tom said

languidly. "It isn't often she gets so excited. What's happened, Edward?"

The way being thus conveniently cleared, he told his story at once, and without any waste of words.

Mrs. Tom, of course, protested that Mona was too young, much too young; that, as a matter of fact, she was a mere child, and couldn't possibly know her own mind, with a great deal more to the same effect; all of which Edward listened to very respectfully, but quickly brushed aside with the ardour of youth and inexperience.

When he walked back to the Hall an hour later, he felt that the great event of his life had been settled, and settled very easily, very naturally, and very satisfactorily. Of course, he and Mona would not be married for a year or two. They were both young, and could afford to wait. Meanwhile, he would be able to spend his time very agreeably between love-making and getting acquainted with the general requirements of the estate.

In St. Aubyn Churchtown, as was quite natural, the newspaper report created quite a flutter of excitement. The prospect of a fashionable wedding at the Hall gave a new interest to existence. No such event had taken place there for a whole generation. Women left their Saturday morning's scrub and scour to discuss the matter with their neighbours; shopkeepers stood at their doors and talked the matter over with their customers; little girls gathered in groups in street and lane and unburdened their hearts with much shaking of their small heads and a bewildering amount of chatter.

At Green Bank, Dorothy was the first to get hold of the paper. She read the paragraph with a little gasp, though for why, she did not know. The young squire was nothing to her, and whether he married his pretty little cousin or remained a bachelor was to her a matter of perfect indiffer-

ence—at least, so she protested to herself. Yet for some reason the paragraph held her as with a spell. She saw nothing else on the printed sheet—did not hear the gong sound for breakfast.

“Are you going to read the paper all the morning?” Miss Jane asked at length.

“Oh no,” she said, starting up. “Is breakfast ready?”

“It has been waiting several minutes. Did you not hear the gong?”

“I confess I didn’t,” Dorothy answered with a smile. “I suppose I must have been thinking of something else.”

“I thought you had got hold of some exciting piece of news,” Miss Jane said, as she poured out the coffee.

“Oh, no,” Dorothy answered indifferently. “The newspapers are very dull these days. One would feel thankful for an earthquake now and then, to have something to talk about.”

“Oh, Dorothy, what will you say next?” Miss Jane said reproachfully.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” the girl answered wearily. “I wish sometimes I could get old suddenly. There seems no place for young people nowadays. Old people appear infinitely happier than the young ones.”

“Why, child, what has disagreed with you?” Miss Jane asked, looking up with an expression of concern in her eyes.

“Nothing has disagreed with me, aunty,” Dorothy answered, with a forced laugh. “I am afraid I am an ungrateful girl. I get restless at the slow pace of St. Aubyn, that’s all. It will wear off after a bit, I expect.”

“I don’t understand how you can think St. Aubyn slow,” Miss Jane said seriously. “There seems to me always something going on. I declare I never seem to have any

time for anything. Before one excitement is over, another begins."

"Excitement, eh?" and Dorothy laughed boisterously. "The only excitement that I know of is when the travelling preachers turn up. I wonder when Mr. Smith will be here again? I hope it will be soon, for he is really good company."

"Yes, he is very good company, Dorothy; but you should not make too much of him;" and Miss Jane relapsed into silence.

Dorothy darted a searching glance at her aunt, but did not reply. She felt that she had said too much already. She was angry with herself that the announcement of Edward Trefusa's engagement had in any way ruffled her serenity. She wished that she could banish the subject from her mind—wished that she could go away from St. Aubyn and never look upon his face again.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TREACHEROUS SEA.

"Life's no resting, but a moving;
Let thy life be deed on deed."

GOETHE.

ABOUT a week later Dorothy started out alone for a ramble on the cliffs. She was in a particularly restless frame of mind. She declared to herself that she was positively discontented. She almost wished she had remained with her nagging stepmother. She had found peace with her aunt Jane, but it was the peace of stagnation. The come-day, go-day life of St. Aubyn was becoming intolerable. The unbroken monotony was acting like an irritant.

The afternoon was warm and drowsy. Scarcely a breath of air was stirring. Even on the cliffs the wind came in the faintest puffs, fitful and uncertain, as though a good steady blow demanded a greater effort than tired Nature could make.

The sea lay perfectly still, or only moved like a monster breathing in its sleep. Even the sea-gulls ceased to wheel and scream in the drowsy air, and hid themselves in the cliffs, or floated idly on the scarcely moving bosom of the deep.

"I wish I could catch the spirit of this slow-moving place," Dorothy said to herself, as she loitered along the

edge of the cliff in the direction of the Porth. "I wonder if it will ever come to me, or if I shall always fret and chafe and beat my wings like a caged bird? I ought to be very happy here with Aunt Jane. She never nags, and I really have nothing to worry me; and yet—and yet I miss something, though I hardly know what it is. I wish Walter Smith would come every week. He is at least good company, and his presence brightens one up wonderfully, somehow."

And a gentler light came into Dorothy's eyes; also a very pleasant memory of a pleasant afternoon only two days ago came back to her; and the echo of some quiet, earnest words he spoke still lingered in her heart. He had not actually made love to her yet. But he would have done so had she given him the opportunity. She could read his eyes like a book, and there was no mistaking the tones of his voice.

She sat down at length in a grassy hollow, and looked a little wearily out over the wide, slumbering sea. To live her life in St. Aubyn seemed to her just then an utter impossibility. But what were the alternatives? She might go back again to her father. But on that point she was by no means certain. He was completely under her stepmother's thumb, who, having got her out of the house, would not very readily take her back again.

Perhaps she might find a situation if she tried. Her stepmother had insisted that she should learn a trade, and for more than a year she had served in a millinery establishment, though her father had never ceased to protest that there was no necessity for such a thing. Yes; she might get a situation somewhere as second or third hand, but the prospect was anything but an inviting one.

What else? Well, there was that to which most girls look forward. She might marry; but the thought brought

no colour to her cheek. Marriage for her had no attractions, except as a change from her present surroundings, and ought she, under such circumstances, to entertain the thought? She felt certain that Walter Smith, if she gave him only the most trifling encouragement, would ask her to marry him. But did she care for him sufficiently to be his wife? She could not deny that she liked him, that she liked him very much. He was handsome, intelligent, and of blameless character. What more could she desire in a husband? She admitted, too, that Green Bank seemed a different place when he was staying there. He brought with him a breath from the outer world; he stirred the stagnant waters of their uneventful life. He talked about books and people; he discussed social and political questions. For the moment he lifted them out of their narrow environment, and introduced them into a new world.

But what of love? She had read in books about some overmastering passion that seized men and women and made them its slaves; a passion that threw its glamour over everything and created the world anew; a passion that swept everything else aside, and reigned itself supreme—sweetest tyrant, divinest king!

But no such passion had ever touched her. Perhaps it did not exist. Works of fiction were not to be taken too seriously. Perhaps this Love, about which poets raved and novelists wove their airy fancies, was, after all, but a figment of the imagination. If it existed, why had it passed her by?

She rose to her feet at length, and strolled toward the Porth. No one was about. The long line of cliffs was deserted. Down in the broad cove, designated the Porth, the waves were creeping rapidly up over the yellow sands. The reef was surrounded already, and its extreme point was under water.

"I shall not be able to get on the rocks to-day, that's certain," she said to herself, as she walked out on the firm sand to meet the incoming tide.

Suddenly a cry smote on her ear, and she paused instantly and looked right and left. It had a sound like a human voice, though it might only be a sea-mew calling across the reef. A second time it came, louder and more piercing than before, nor was there any doubt as to the direction whence it came.

Dorothy shaded her eyes with her hand, and looked toward the cliff. For a moment or two she could see nothing; then she caught sight of something that looked like a girl, standing close under the gray cliffs.

"Help! help!" came the cry again, and then a white pocket-handkerchief was waved.

Dorothy caught her breath sharply, and pressed her hand to her side. It was clear enough what had happened, and the same thing had happened hundreds of times before, and would happen again, in spite of all the warnings that might be given. Somebody had gone out on the great reef to breathe the cool air of the sea, perhaps to dream, and, while there, the tide had crept noiselessly in, so noiselessly that its presence was unsuspected. Moreover, who would dream of danger, when the reef was high and dry straight back to the cliffs? So the girl—whoever she was—had retreated, perhaps carelessly enough, only to find, on reaching the face of the cliff, that she could get no further.

Dorothy's first feeling was one of utter helplessness. For the moment there seemed absolutely nothing that could be done to save the life of the girl. Already the great, slow-moving monster was rolling lazily over the reef from end to end. The girl had clearly reached the highest point she could gain, and it wanted two hours yet to full tide. There was no boat nearer than Pendruthen, and that was five

miles away. There was no other human being in sight. Back at the mouth of the Porth was a little public-house. But Tommy and Jennifer Juliff were both old and feeble, and could render no help in a case like this. Nevertheless, they must be told, and, waving her handkerchief in response to the cry of the girl, she darted back over the dry, firm sand like the wind. But it was so much labour lost. Only Jennifer was about. Tommy had gone into St. Aubyn on a shopping expedition.

"What shall we do?" said Dorothy in hurried gasps. "We cannot let the girl drown."

"Did you say 'twas a girl?" said Jennifer.

"I did," said Dorothy. "What of that?"

"Then it'll be Mrs. Tom Trefusa's maid, you may depend. Her as the young squire have got engaged to."

"What makes you say that?" Dorothy questioned.

"Because I seed her come down this way two hours agone or more. She do often come down here to the Porth, she do. She's terrible fond of the say."

Dorothy wrung her hands, and a look almost of despair came into her eyes.

"Can nothing be done?" she said imploringly.

"I'm afear'd there caan't," the old woman answered, in a tone of comparative indifference. "I'm too owld to swim myself. An' my old man ain't no better than me."

"Swim!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I can swim. Let me take my skirts off here, Mrs. Juliff; there are only our two selves. No one will see me. Perhaps I shall fail. Anyhow, I can try, and if I drown—why, I shall drown trying to save somebody."

A few minutes later a strangely-attired figure was bounding across the sand, leaving the tracks of her bare feet plainly visible. Mona from her perch saw her coming, and dried her tears. At least, an effort was to be made to save her,

and that was something. Even if it failed, it was better than drowning alone like a rat in a hole.

Dorothy waded into the water, keeping as close to the cliff as possible, and, whenever possible, creeping over the rocks in the direction she wanted to go. Every now and then she would drop into deep water, and swim across a little bay, then climb over a ledge of rocks, and into deep water again. In this way she was saved the exhaustion of continuous swimming, while she could pause every now and then to regain her breath. It was no easy task to climb over the sharp rocks on bare hands and feet. She was too excited, however, to heed the cuts and bruises, except when the salt water penetrated more deeply than usual. Fortunately the sea remained perfectly calm. It was

“Such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam.”

Now and then a faint sob echoed from some cave in the rocks, but that was the only noise made. Excited as Dorothy was, she could not help noticing the rich colours that shot through the water's clear depths. In the shadow of the rocks it was a deep bottle-green, which shaded out into the sunlight to a delicate gold. So clear was it that she could see every pebble lying at the bottom, and so buoyant that she had no difficulty in keeping afloat.

Now and then she discovered that she was unable to climb over the rocky promontories that divided the little bays, and so she was perforce compelled to swim round them.

Poor Mona, with the water steadily rising about her, watched Dorothy's appearance and disappearance with mingled hope and fear. While her little platform remained high and dry her position did not seem so terrible; but when the cold water began to creep round her feet and steal over her ankles, she almost gave up hope.

Minutes had passed since she had seen her would-be rescuer, and she began to fear that she had failed in her effort and had given up the attempt. And if so, it was not to be surprised at. Women were not generally strong swimmers, nor had they, as a rule, much power of endurance. Even if this unknown Amazon reached her, the chances were that her well-meant efforts would be of no avail.

"If only Ted knew!" she murmured to herself, and then her eyes filled with tears again. He had been so kind to her, and he seemed to love her so sincerely; not boisterously, not with any passionate exhibition, but with almost pathetic tenderness, he had manifested his affection.

"Poor Ted! I know he will be sorry," she murmured. "And what will mother do? It seems terrible if I am to be drowned like the rest. Poor mother! How foolish I was to come here alone!"

And then she began to pray. There was no sign of Dorothy anywhere, and the water was rising—rising, oh, so cruelly!

"Oh, Lord in heaven!" she cried. "For mother's sake, save me. My father was drowned, and my brother. Let me not drown also."

Then suddenly Dorothy's head appeared around a point of rock, and with a few rapid strokes she came up and clutched a ledge of rock close to Mona's feet. It seemed like a direct answer to her prayer, and hastily brushing her hand across her eyes, she cried out:

"Oh, how good of you to come to save me, and I know you will."

"I will try," Dorothy gasped; "but you will have to be very brave."

"I will do anything that you tell me," Mona answered; "and I think I know how to swim just a little bit."

"That is to our advantage," Dorothy answered. "But please be quick and get off your clothes; we should both drown with those skirts trailing about you."

"Oh, but——" Mona began, but Dorothy cut her short.

"No buts, please; be quick and do as I tell you. Our first swim is a longish one."

Mona needed no second bidding.

"Get your boots off also," Dorothy called. "Now slip down here by my side. You'll find the water a little cold at first, but you'll get used to it. There! don't gasp so. Get your arm tightly round me; strike out with your other arm as well as you can, and, for Heaven's sake, don't imagine you are going to drown. Now, are you ready?"

A faint gasp was the only answer, and the next moment Mona heard the water singing in her ears as the cold waves closed over her head.

"We are going straight to the bottom," was the thought that flashed through her mind; the next moment her head came suddenly above the surface, and courage returned again.

Remembering Dorothy's instructions, she struck out with her disengaged hand as well as she could, and discovered, to her joy, that they were making progress; but, alas! it seemed terribly slow.

"Kick out!" Dorothy gasped, as they were rounding the point—and then followed a life and death struggle. It was a fairly wide bay they were swimming across, to a point where the rocks were almost on a level with the water.

Mona's strength soon gave out, and she was able only to cling to Dorothy with a tenacity born of absolute terror.

"Don't—give—in!" Dorothy called, bringing out the words in gasps—for the salt-water was constantly lapping over her mouth and nostrils, and her own strength was ebbing at a most alarming rate. She began to fear at length

that it was a hopeless struggle. Mona's weight seemed to increase with every passing moment. Once the question shot through her mind, "Shall I cast off my companion and save my own life?" but she dismissed it as soon as it came.

"I'll never give up," was her thought, "while there's life left in me;" and putting forth all her strength, she made for the nearest point of rock, where fortunately it descended into the water by a series of natural steps.

Mona suddenly recovered herself when her feet touched something solid and firm, and with Dorothy's aid climbed easily out of the water.

"How do you feel now?" Dorothy questioned, sitting down in the eye of the sun and breathing hard.

"Oh, I don't know," Mona answered, shivering from head to foot. "Are we safe now?"

"Well, not quite," Dorothy said with a smile; "but we are nearer safety than when we started."

"But shall we have to go into the water again?"

"Unfortunately we shall, and we have no time to lose over it, either, for the tide is still rising rapidly."

"Oh, what shall I do?" Mona moaned. "If I were only strong like you! What a magnificent girl you are!"

Dorothy smiled pityingly. Stripped of her outer garments, Mona seemed the merest child.

"Don't lose heart," Dorothy said at length, rising to her feet. "And don't mind a few cuts and bruises. We can get along on the rocks now some considerable distance."

"I wish we could climb to the top," Mona said.

"That is impossible," was the quick reply. "But we have turned the corner into the bay now, and every step we take is in the right direction."

For the next five minutes no word was spoken. Keeping close under the cliffs, they crept along narrow ledges and

over rocky spurs, lacerating their hands and feet, and almost covering themselves with bruises. But painful as was this part of the journey, Mona minded it infinitely less than when they had to take to the water again.

"Is there no help for it?" she asked, when they reached a point where the cliff dropped sheer into the sea.

"If we were spiders we might manage it," Dorothy answered with a laugh. "But I don't see how two girls are to get along the face of that cliff."

"Oh, you are a splendid girl!" Mona said impulsively. "You make me ashamed of myself."

"We must not talk about that now," Dorothy answered, with one of her winsome smiles. "But look! there's Mrs. Juliff coming down the beach with what looks like a bundle of shawls. Now for another plunge."

Fortunately the bay was only a narrow one, and after an exhausting struggle of a few minutes they clambered, spent and breathless, on to another ledge of rocks.

Here they rested several minutes, but neither was in the mood for speech. Mona looked as though at any moment she might faint, and Dorothy felt as though everything was slipping from under her feet.

"This will never do," she said resolutely. "To give in when the victory is so nearly won would be cowardly. Now, Miss Trefusa, are you ready for another clamber?"

"Do you know me?" Mona asked with sudden interest.

"Everyone in St. Aubyn knows you," Dorothy said with a smile.

"And who are you?" Mona questioned eagerly. "I've seen your face before, I know."

"Once before, I think."

"And where was that?"

"At Four Lane Ends, when I was surrounded by a crowd of yelling boys."

"Oh yes, I know ; and Ted has been awfully curious ever since to know who you were. Now, do tell me."

Dorothy smiled at the sudden interest aroused in her little shivering companion.

"Follow me quickly," she said. "We must keep our blood in circulation ; and I will tell you all about myself as we scramble over the rocks."

It proved a cruel scramble. The rocks were sharp, and they were too weak and exhausted to pick their way with any care. Blood flowed freely from the hands and feet of both, and marked only too vividly the way they travelled. And in the end it seemed all in vain. A broad bay, that was dry shingle when Dorothy started on her errand of mercy, was now flooded with the incoming tide, and there was no way to the other side but through the water.

Dorothy gave a groan and sat down on the shelving rocks. She felt she had no strength left.

Mona came close to her, and put her cold arms about her neck.

"Never mind, Dorothy," she said ; "if we have lost our lives, we have found each other."

CHAPTER X.

A DISTURBING ELEMENT.

“Life is not as idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom;
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use.”

TENNYSON.

DOROTHY was much more exhausted than Mona. Her strength had been more severely taxed. For her companion's sake she had held out bravely. But there was a limit to even her powers, and when she sat down on the rocks on the edge of the last bay, she knew that she could not swim another yard to save her life. Mona seemed incapable of making any effort on her own account. She could follow the lead of others, but she had no power of initiation; and so when Dorothy appeared to give up hope, she gave up hope also. Yet she was not without courage, and in presence of danger—perhaps death—she was as calm as Dorothy was. That arose, no doubt, partly from the fact that she lacked Dorothy's vivid imagination, nor was her passion for life so vigorous and strong.

Yet, had Dorothy been alone, she would have yielded to the faintness that was creeping over her, and prayed that the end might come quickly. But the sight of Mona stung her into still further resistance.

"I cannot see anything very clearly," she said faintly, battling heroically with the strange numbness that was creeping over her, "but it has occurred to me that the water may not be very deep here yet."

Instantly Mona went close to the water's edge, and looked at it.

"I don't think it is deep at all," she cried.

"It is often deeper than it looks," Dorothy said faintly.

"Could you hold my hand if I got down into it?" Mona asked.

"I will try," she answered, and, making a desperate effort, she crawled to Mona's side.

The latter took her hand, and slipped down into the water. A moment later a joyful cry burst from her lips.

"I'm at the bottom," she said, "and the water barely covers my shoulders!"

Dorothy felt in a moment as if possessed with new life. In a very few seconds she was by her companion's side, wading towards the open bay and the stretch of yellow sand. Fortunately, there were no holes or rocks, and the farther they waded the shallower became the water. At length, after what seemed an almost interminable period, they turned the point of rock, around the base of which the tide was beginning to crawl, and found Mrs. Juliff waiting for them on the opposite side, and much wondering at their long delay.

Instantly the old woman wrapped them in the shawls she had brought, but scarcely had she done so, when Dorothy fell at her feet in a dead faint. Her splendid strength had completely given out; her strong will had been forced to yield.

Mona looked at her rescuer in dismay, then glanced appealingly up into the old woman's face.

"I don't know what we can do," the old woman said, as

if in response to the mute appeal. "We caan't either of us carry her, that's sartin. You ain't 'ardly strength to walk yerself, miss, an' I never thought of bringin' a drap of brandy with me. Oh dear! I didn't think either of 'ee 'd be so done up."

Mona had no strength to reply; she sat down on the sand by Dorothy's side, and hugged her knees. Her teeth were chattering, her lips livid, her limbs blue and numbed with the cold.

"You'd better stay 'ere," Mrs. Juliff said at length, "an' I'll toddle back an' fetch something."

"Yes—I'll—stay," Mona answered feebly, the words coming in gasps between her chattering teeth. She felt as though she would never move again.

A moment later she heard a call in Mrs. Juliff's quavering voice:

"Hi, here, both on you, quick! quick!"

Mona turned her head wearily, and saw Edward Trefusa bounding over the sand toward them, followed at some distance by Tommy Juliff.

In an instant her eyes filled with tears, and she bent over the prostrate form of her companion and kissed her. She had scarcely raised her head again, when Edward was by her side.

"Mona, my darling, what is the meaning of this?" he asked excitedly.

"She's only fainted," was the reply; "you must carry her up to the house, Edward. I think I can walk, if only Tommy will help me."

"But how did it happen?" he asked, glancing down at the still, white face of Dorothy. Then he gave a start and caught his breath with a sudden gasp. It was the beautiful face that had been haunting him for weeks.

"I've been very foolish, Ted," Mona answered feebly,



It was the beautiful face that had been haunting him for weeks.

"and I should have been drowned had she not saved me. But there's no time to waste. Take her in your arms, for you are strong and can carry her easily. Mr. Juliff, will you help me?"

"Ay, that I will," said Tommy, hurrying up, panting and breathless. "I'm 'feard I can't carry 'ee, miss, but you can lean on me."

The next moment Edward had gathered Dorothy into his strong arms and was hurrying with her toward the house. Her beautiful head rested on his left shoulder, her neck was close to his face, her heart was beating feebly against his own. He did not feel her weight; a strange, wild delirium possessed him, a delicious madness coursed like nectar through his veins, a rapture, exquisite to the point of pain, thrilled him to his finger-tips.

He felt as though he would like to run on, bearing this precious burden, to the end of the world. He forgot Mona, forgot the promises that had passed between them scarcely more than a week ago—forgot everything, in fact. He was conscious only that he was holding this loveliest of all women in his arms, that her form was pressed close to his own, that her breath was faint and warm upon his neck. He had no time to reason about the matter, nor will, nor desire. In the sweet delirium of the moment all else was swallowed up and forgotten.

Under other conditions he would have felt the distance interminably long, and even now his strength was giving out—for Dorothy was no light weight—though he was unconscious of the fact.

Just before they reached the little inn Dorothy opened her eyes and looked round her; then she raised her head from his shoulder, but quickly let it fall again.

"Where am I?" she asked feebly. "What has happened?"

"Don't alarm yourself," he answered. "You will soon be all right again. You have had rather a bad faint, that is all."

"Did I faint?" she questioned slowly and wearily.

"You overtaxed yourself in saving Mona."

"Oh yes, I remember," she interrupted. "Is she all right? Where is she?"

"She is coming on behind with Tommy Juliff. I don't think she will be any the worse for the adventure."

"Oh, I am glad; but let me walk, please. I am better now."

"We are almost close to the house," he answered. "Besides, we have got off the sand now, and the road is stony."

He did not see the warm blush that ran swiftly up her neck and face. Like a flash it came back to her that her feet were bare, and that her dress consisted of little more than Mrs. Juliff's shawl.

"It is very good of you to carry me," she said at length, as they were passing through the open doorway. "I thank you very much."

He did not reply. He could not say all that was in his heart to say. He quietly laid her on the sofa that Mrs. Juliff had prepared, and instantly turned away and walked out of the house.

Mona was still down on the beach, creeping slowly by Tommy's side and leaning heavily on his arm. She was trying her best to be brave, keeping her lips tightly shut, so that she might not cry out when the sharp sand cut her lacerated feet.

Edward felt terribly guilty when he looked at her, and, running hastily to meet them, he caught her in his arms as though she were a child. "I'm so sorry, Mona," he said penitently; but she did not seem to hear him.

"I did not mean to neglect you," he went on, "but I could not get back any sooner."

"Of course you couldn't, Ted. Has she come round?"

"Yes; she was able to talk before we got to the house."

"Oh, I am thankful! Isn't she a beautiful girl? and, oh! she is so strong and brave. I should have just drowned by slow inches if she had not come to me."

"It is a mercy she saw you," he said, pressing her more closely to him, as though he would make atonement for those minutes of forgetfulness when he held Dorothy in his arms.

"I ought to have known better," she answered reproachfully; "but I forgot all about it being spring-tides."

"Never mind," he said tenderly. "'All's well that ends well.'" He could not reproach her. He was not so innocent himself that he could afford to throw stones.

"Are you thinking how heavy I am, Ted?" she said at length, for silence had fallen between them.

"Oh no! Not at all," he answered with a start. "The fact is, you are not heavy at all. I could carry you all the way to Pendormic."

"You would not like to."

"Oh, I wouldn't mind;" and then a hot blush stole up into his face, for something whispered to him, "You would rather carry Dorothy." He knew also that the whispered word was true, and was stung with a sense of guilt in consequence. Wrestle with himself as he would, the fact was there, that Dorothy's warm breath upon his neck sent the blood coursing through his veins like liquid fire.

And then the accusing question haunted him: Why did he not thrill under Mona's weight as he had done under Dorothy's? Mona was his promised wife—the girl he had chosen out of all the world, the one he had fancied he had loved more than all the world besides.

Had he made a mistake?

"Oh, no, no! that cannot be," he said to himself. And he pressed Mona more closely to his heart. "It is Mona I love; the other was but a passing delirium—a moment of intoxication that will never come again."

"You are glad I am safe, are you not, Ted?" Mona whispered in his ear.

"I am indeed, sweetheart," he answered tenderly.

"And you will not forget to thank Dorothy, Ted? I have quite lost my heart to her. She is so beautiful and so strong."

"We shall none of us forget to thank her. I suppose we shall find out now who she is, and where she lives?"

"I've found out already. But here we are at the door. I'm sure you must be tired. I wish there was someone we could send to the cottage for my things, for I shall need a whole wardrobe."

"I will go myself, and bring the brougham to fetch you back."

"And bring Jane with you. Make light of it to mother."

"All right. Be sure and keep yourself warm." And he hurried away.

Two hours later the Pendormic landau stood at the door of the little inn. Jennifer declared that she got quite a turn. She was not used to so much splendour near her humble establishment. A farmer's was the grandest vehicle that ever before drew up at her door. But a pair of prancing bays with silver-mounted harness, and a coachman in resplendent livery, was a sight for the gods; for so humble an individual as Jennifer it was simply overpowering. She curtsied to the coachman as though he had been some great county magnate, or even the Duke of Cornwall himself. Edward Trefusa was dressed like any other ordinary

individual, and consequently he did not impress Jennifer so profoundly.

In one of the bedrooms of the little inn all was bustle and mild excitement. The wardrobe Jane had hurriedly got together was of a somewhat mixed character. Moreover, Dorothy had to be accommodated, with results that were vastly entertaining.

Little screams of laughter penetrated every now and then into the rooms below, which were very reassuring to Edward, if not to Jennifer and Tommy.

"They seem to be bright'nin' up," Tommy remarked, lifting his head and listening. "I doan't think they wa'n't be noan the worse. Salt watter never do hurt nobody."

"If they don't get colds," Edward said quietly, "they will soon be all right again."

"Jennifer says as her as ain't Miss Trefusa be terribly bruised," Tommy remarked reflectively.

"Indeed," said Edward; "I didn't know."

"She had to climb over a terrible lot of rocks afore she could reach her, you see."

"I thought she swam."

"Not all the way. Oh, bless you, no, sur! her couldn't do that."

Edward was silent. The thought of Dorothy being terribly bruised, and all for Mona's sake, moved him strangely. Also he understood now the secret of her faintness, and why, strong as she was, she was more exhausted than Mona.

"She's a friend of Miss Trefusa's, I reckon," Tommy remarked, after a pause.

"After to-day," was the quiet reply.

"Oh!"

Then silence again, which was broken by more shrieks of laughter from the room above.

After awhile there was a footstep on the carpetless stairs, and Edward rushed at once to the assistance of Mona and Dorothy. The latter brought up the rear, and moved very slowly and painfully.

"Don't trouble about me, Ted," Mona said to him; "but help Miss Grey. She is more hurt than she owns to."

Dorothy was only too glad of his assistance, and he almost carried her downstairs, and again the blood ran like wine in his veins.

In the carriage he sat directly opposite Dorothy, and feasted his eyes on her beauty during all the drive to St. Aubyn. He was able to do so easily without seeming rude, for she scarcely looked at him during the journey. She lay back among the cushions with closed eyes, and seemed too exhausted to notice anything.

Mona was too anxious about her deliverer to notice her lover, nor was she one that cared for a great deal of attention.

Outwardly Edward appeared calm enough, but the tumult within was unlike anything he had ever experienced before. He felt that a new force had come into his life, but what it was he could not determine. Whether good or evil he could not say. He feared the latter. Even thus early he felt that if he yielded to it, it would wean away his thoughts, perhaps his affection, from Mona, and make him false to the most solemn promises of his life.

The journey came to an end all too soon. He felt that he would never tire of looking at the strong, mobile face. But when they reached St. Aubyn, Dorothy sat up and opened her eyes, and so he could only look at her furtively now and then.

At Green Bank Miss Jane stood at the gate with a look of great anxiety in her eyes.

"Is that you, Dorothy?" she exclaimed, as soon as the

carriage pulled up. "Oh, what a relief! For the last hour I've been nearly distracted; I thought something terrible had happened."

"Something terrible would have happened but for your niece," Edward said quickly. "She has saved Miss Trefusa from drowning."

"Please don't mention it," Dorothy said, with rising colour.

Miss Jane could only gasp and wring her hands. Mona insisted on going with Dorothy into the house, and, of course, Edward offered her his arm up the garden-path, which she readily took.

"I shall be all right by to-morrow, aunty," Dorothy said reassuringly, seeing the look of alarm in Miss Jane's eyes. "I'm only a bit bruised."

"She's more bruised than she owns to," said Mona.

"Oh dear!" said Miss Jane. "I'll send for Dr. Trelouth at once."

"You must do nothing of the kind," Dorothy said with a smile, as she sank into an easy-chair. "I want a cup of tea and a nap, and then I shall be all right."

Mona kissed her affectionately before she left, and Edward held her hand longer than the occasion demanded. And so ended an episode simple enough in itself, and yet fraught with most important issues to several of the principal characters of our story.

CHAPTER XI.

GOOD INTENTIONS.

“Chance will not do the work,
Chance sends the breeze,
But if the pilot slumber at the helm,
The very wind that wafts us towards the port
May dash us on the shelves.”

SCOTT.

MONA was sufficiently well on the following afternoon to drive with her lover into St. Aubyn and call on Miss Jane and Dorothy. The latter had only just got downstairs, and was seated in a large easy-chair in the pretty, if somewhat prim, little drawing-room, attired in a tea-gown of the most becoming style, which set off her beauty to perfection. She was still much paler than usual; but that rather added to her charms than otherwise, while the soft, almost pathetic light in her eyes further increased her loveliness.

Miss Jane, after seeing her made comfortable, had retired to the morning-room for her afternoon siesta, and, if the truth must be told, had fallen into a heavy sleep. This was quite excusable under the circumstances. Her rest had been much disturbed during the previous night by horrible dreams—dreams in which Dorothy was always in some deadly peril, while she was powerless to help her.

She did not, therefore, hear the bell ring, nor the unfamiliar voices in the hall when the door was opened.

Dorothy had given a little start, and was leaning forward in a listening attitude, much wondering who the visitors could be, and making a mental calculation the while as to the date of the "travelling preacher's" next appearance, when the door was thrown suddenly open and Mona and Edward were ushered into her presence.

She started to her feet in a moment, forgetful of her weakness and bruises, while Mona ran to her as though they had been lifelong friends, and kissed her affectionately.

Edward stood a little back, quite unnoticed for several minutes. Mona had so much to say, so many thanks to tender, such a lengthy message of gratitude from her mother to deliver, and such a pressing invitation that Dorothy would visit them at the cottage, that she quite forgot Edward's presence; and it was not till Dorothy gently released herself, and advanced towards him with one of her most genial and bewitching smiles, that Mona realized the fact that her lover had not yet spoken.

Edward had watched the interplay of courtesies between the two girls with the deepest interest, and with a curious fluttering at his heart. This was the third time he had seen Dorothy, and each time he had seen her in a new aspect, had looked at her from a new standpoint, had caught a glimpse of a new phase of her many-sided and striking personality.

Moreover, he was at the most impressionable period of his life. Also he had a Greek's love for curve and line, and form and strength. Physical beauty alone awoke in him the profoundest admiration, and here was a woman like no other that he had ever seen: beautiful as a Greek goddess, tall as Hebe, fairer than Iolanthe, and with a voice more musical than Apollo's lute.

To simply stand and look at her was a joy. To watch the play of her features, the curving of the lips, the dilatings

of the proud nostrils, the light dancing in her liquid eyes, made him forgetful of everything else, and stirred in him a strange sense of ecstasy such as he had never known before.

Admiration he had felt when he first saw her at Four Lane Ends, standing firm and defiant before a pack of yelling boys. But something more than admiration had possessed him on the previous day, when he held her in his arms and pressed her close to his heart—something that he had no name for, something untranslatable, inexpressible. And now a new sensation was dominating him, overmastering him, transforming him. Like St. Paul, he hardly knew whether he was in the body or out of it, until she smiled upon him and offered him her hand.

Then memory awoke, and conscience, and he saw the impassable barrier that lay between them. And Paradise was spoiled for him because there was a tree in it that had forbidden fruit, and he desired the fruit of that tree more than that of all the other trees in the garden.

He took her hand in silence, but the touch of her fingers thrilled him like a psalm, only the psalm was wild and woeful and despairing.

"You will allow me, Miss Grey," he said, "to add my own and my grandfather's thanks to Mona's and her mother's. Indeed, no words can convey to you our sense of gratitude.

"It is very kind of you all," she said, quite simply and naturally. "But I am sure I am not deserving of so many compliments. I only did what anyone else would have done under the circumstances."

"So few ladies *could* have done what you did," he answered. "You must be a particularly good swimmer."

"Ah, that is a fortunate accident," she said, with a smile. "You see, I am a minister's daughter, and was educated

at a big college in the North of England for ministers' daughters. We were not taught dancing, but we learnt swimming instead. Once every week we marched off to the swimming-baths—said to be the finest in England—and I got to like it immensely."

"And then you are so strong," Mona interposed.

"Perhaps that is the reason I like the water so much. I remember some of the girls shrank from it with positive dread. Indeed, a few had to be excused from going—it gave them such frightful headaches."

"On what strange chances life depends!" Edward said reflectively.

"Do you know, Mr. Trefusa, the same thought has often occurred to me," she answered gravely. "It seems to me sometimes as if everything of moment was just a mere matter of chance. Pulling a button off or breaking a bootlace may affect the destinies of a dozen people or a thousand. Five minutes too early or too late, the delay of a telegram, the miscarriage of a message or a letter, and a fortune is made or lost, a life is redeemed or destroyed."

Edward listened with a look of wonder in his eyes. This was another revelation. He did not know that girls ever talked in that way. Mona never attempted to discuss the problems of life and destiny.

He did not consider that Dorothy had been reared in a minister's home, where serious questions constantly came up for discussion, and where serious books lined the shelves. Dorothy had been comrade as well as daughter until her father took this new wife to his bosom. Then, of course, everything was changed, and she was sent out, not to discuss the serious side of life, but to live it.

For the next half-hour all the talk was between Dorothy and Edward; Mona felt that she was out of it completely. Questions were discussed with ease and animation that

were altogether beyond her. Books and authors and philosophies were criticised with a freedom that almost took her breath away. She could only listen in open-eyed wonder and humiliation. She felt as though she knew nothing, had read nothing, and had never taken the trouble to think. These two people had got into a world that she had not even dreamed of, and had left her standing outside the fast-barred gate, with no strength or will to shoot the bolt.

Her lover appeared to her in a new light. She never heard him talk before as he was talking now. He waxed eloquent sometimes; his eyes shone with a new light; his gestures were full of animation.

Dorothy was as animated as he. To have this young squire to talk to, she felt, was better than entertaining "the travelling preacher." He was as handsome as Walter Smith, and much more widely read. He might not be so well versed in theology, but he knew more about everything else, and he talked with even greater ease than the minister did.

Edward had found his most congenial element. At Pendormic he lived his intellectual life alone. He read his favourite authors and re-read them, but he discussed them with no one. Peter knew nothing about books, and cared less. Nothing was valuable in his eyes that could not be turned into money, and he was but a type of a great many others. The young nobs of the county with whom he was brought into occasional contact were not exactly of the intellectual sort. They knew the points of a horse, the breed of a dog, the tricks of a snipe; they could ride and hunt and shoot; they could shuffle a pack of cards, or handle a billiard cue, or whirl in a dance with grace and skill and dexterity; they knew a good deal about covers, about coursing and racing; they could talk society small-

talk in a languid sort of way; but beyond these things their accomplishments did not extend. There were a few country gentlemen of literary, scientific, and antiquarian tastes in the neighbourhood, but as yet he had had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. And his grandfather, as was natural, had never interested himself in the matter.

So, intellectually, he had lived alone and apart from his kind. Hence, a conversation with Dorothy was like a draught of spring-water to a thirsty traveller. Had he suddenly dropped upon hidden treasure, he could not have been more delighted. To talk about his favourite books and authors with someone who knew them and loved them was an unexpected joy. And when that someone was so beautiful, and as strong physically as she was vigorous intellectually, the joy was enhanced a hundredfold.

He felt himself that he had never talked so well in his life before—with so much ease and animation, or with anything approaching the correctness of expression; while Dorothy was lifted completely out of herself, and was utterly unconscious of her pains and bruises.

How long the conversation would have lasted it is impossible to say, had not Miss Jane suddenly appeared upon the scene.

Miss Jane had been aroused out of a heavy sleep by a noise in the kitchen, and had started suddenly to her feet and rushed into the hall, feeling that she had been guilty of a serious indiscretion in sleeping so long and so heavily in the daytime. Forty winks might be allowable, but such a sleep as she had indulged in was exceedingly stupid, and she felt very stupid in consequence. At the drawing-room door she paused, arrested by the sound of strange voices. She felt more guilty than ever now. People had called, and she had not been there to receive them.

Back she ran to the kitchen to make inquiries.

"It's the young squire, mum, and Miss Trefusa," said Ann, the housemaid.

Miss Jane felt ready to sink through the floor. "Guilty" was not the word to use. It was altogether too tame and meaningless. She was not of the sort who think it good form to keep visitors waiting the best part of an hour before putting in an appearance.

"Whatever will they think of me?" she said to herself, as she rushed hurriedly upstairs. "And yet I *must* put on my best cap. I wonder if I dare give myself time to change my dress?"

On second thoughts she concluded that a few minutes more or less now could make no difference, consequently, when at length she stepped into the drawing-room, Dorothy beheld her arrayed in her very best.

The bookish talk came to a sudden stop, much to Mona's relief. Miss Jane apologized with much volubility, and related some of her dreams of the previous night in extenuation of her conduct. Edward was deferential and polite, which won Miss Jane's heart directly, while Mona discussed the eternal servant's question with such insight and sympathy that Miss Jane declared afterwards that she was the dearest and sweetest little creature she had ever seen in her life.

* * * * *

Edward was very silent as he drove homeward through the sunshine. Miss Jane's sense of "guiltiness" was as nothing in comparison with what he felt. He had scarcely looked at Mona or thought of her during all the time he had been in Miss Jane's drawing-room. Dorothy had eclipsed her completely; blotted her out from his vision; filled all his thoughts and all his heart.

He knew he had no tenable defence to offer. Mona was

his affianced wife. He had chosen her to be his lifelong companion, had told her that he loved her with all his love, and yet within a fortnight he was ready to fall down and worship another woman.

How should he characterize himself? Was he traitor, deceiver, hypocrite, or all these rolled into one? Or was he simply the unwilling victim of a cruel fate? He seemed quite unable to think calmly. Everything was in a jumble. The only thing clear to him was that Mona was not the loveliest woman in the world, nor the most interesting, nor the most to be desired. This queenly stranger, whose face and manner had attracted him at the first, and about whom he had felt such an unusual amount of curiosity, had upon a closer acquaintance dominated him completely. He felt that he was her slave, that he would go for her to the ends of the earth and account it a joy.

He knew that it was wrong—so wrong that he had hardly the courage to look at Mona, who sat so demurely by his side: sweet, gentle, loving Mona, who was not clever or brilliant or regal, but who was good and gracious, and full of tenderness and sympathy.

“Little girl,” he said at length, when the horse began to climb the hill and Job jumped off to walk, “you are very quiet.” And there was a tone of tenderness in his voice which was unmistakeable.

“Am I, Ted?” she answered, smiling up into his face; “I was only thinking.”

“Then a penny for your thoughts,” he said playfully.

“I was thinking of Dorothy,” was the answer—“thinking what a brave, clever, beautiful woman she is. I feel quite a little goose by her side.”

“No, Mona, please. Don’t call yourself names,” he said deprecatingly.

“Why, don’t you think so?”

"No, Mona; there is nothing of the goose about you."

"But I am not clever, as she is."

"Not clever in the same way, perhaps. It would be a very stupid, uninteresting world if Nature made everybody on precisely the same pattern."

"Nevertheless, it must be very comforting to feel that you belong to the highest type."

"Then, little girl, you have that comfort," he answered, with a smile. "You are as richly endowed in your own way as Miss Grey is in hers."

"Ah, Ted, that is only a generous fancy of yours," she said, with a little wistful smile. "I know you give me credit for excellences I do not possess. Love, you know, is always blind."

"No, Mona; I believe rather, with a modern writer, that love is an extra eye, strengthening the other two, and discovering much that was unseen before."

"Ah, well, Ted, I cannot argue, so you must be content with me as I am."

He winced a little. - Would he be content? Had he never seen Dorothy, his satisfaction would be complete enough; but now the issue was by no means clear. Of course, he would try his best. He intended to be true to Mona, whatever the consequences might be to himself. The idea of breaking his promise never crossed his mind. He might break his heart; but hearts were trifles where honour was concerned. It was an understood thing that he and Mona were to be married, and, all things considered, the sooner the wedding took place the better. When she was actually his wife, he would probably cease to think of any other woman. Moreover, they would go away for a long honeymoon together, and meanwhile Dorothy might marry someone and go away from St. Aubyn, and their paths might never cross again.

And he winced again, and very unmistakeably, whilst a cold feeling crept round the region of his heart. The idea of never seeing Dorothy, of losing her out of his life completely, was too painful to contemplate.

“And yet I must keep away from St. Aubyn,” he said to himself. “For my own sake and Mona’s, I must see as little of her as possible. It may be only a passing mood, a violent but evanescent fancy. She is a beautiful and striking woman, no doubt—clever and well-read. But heart, after all, is more than intellect, and moral worth more than physical beauty. No; I will keep away from St. Aubyn for a week or two; I will not even look at her.” And, whipping up his horse, he was soon at the cottage, helping Mona to alight.

It is proverbially easy to make good resolutions. Alas! is not the way to a certain tropical region paved with good intentions? As we look back, we most of us discover that our life has been rich in promises. Performances? Fulfillments? Well, we had better be silent on those points.

Edward Trefusa was sincere enough in his intentions. Yet, on the following afternoon, as Ezra Drake was passing Green Bank, he saw the young squire and Dorothy Grey sitting side by side on a garden-chair, engaged in very animated conversation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LOVE THAT LIVES.

“ Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with
might ;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of
sight.”

TENNYSON.

DURING the next two or three months Edward dwelt in a little hell of torment, which was largely of his own creation. Had he stuck to his resolution, and kept away from St. Aubyn, he might have attained to a far different state of mind and heart. But the attraction of Dorothy's presence proved too strong for him. He was constantly finding some excuse for running into St. Aubyn, and of course he always took the road that led past Green Bank. He got to know the hour when she took her walks, the people and places she visited, the pleasantest field-paths where she loitered when the weather was fine. So it happened that they were constantly meeting each other—by accident, of course ; and occasionally, if their way lay in the same direction, they took long rambles together. Besides all this, Mona had taken such a fancy to Dorothy, that scarcely a week passed that she did not have her at the cottage. There was no jealousy in Mona's heart. Edward was as attentive to her as he had ever been. He had never been effusive in his

love-making; she did not want him to be; she knew he was fond of her, and she was fond of him; at least, there was nobody else she liked so well. She had no misgivings with respect to their marriage; she did not believe that Edward ever could be anything but good and kind and attentive: it was his nature.

Hence, when Dorothy came to the cottage, she always contrived that Edward should be a good deal with her. Edward could talk about books, and all sorts of things that Dorothy took pleasure in, and to give Dorothy pleasure was just as good as having pleasure herself.

Edward avoided questioning himself any more closely than he could help. He was conscious that he was treading on dangerous ground; he knew only too well what the end would be. Yet the path was so seductive; there was so much honey with the rue that he had not the courage to pull himself up. Like other mortals, he kept hoping that something would happen that never did happen yet, and probably never will.

Like other mortals, also, he was able to find excuses and palliations in abundance. He was not disloyal to Mona. Of course not, he was not conscious of any diminution in his affection for her. He certainly never dreamed of being unfaithful to his promise. He was prepared to marry her the very next week, if his grandfather insisted upon it and Mona was agreeable. He hoped, nevertheless, that his grandfather would be in no such hurry, that Mona's mother would not be able to spare her just yet.

Also, he said to himself, that because a man was engaged to be married, that was no reason why he should not have a lady friend, or a dozen lady friends, for that matter. Dorothy was Mona's friend, therefore his. She had saved Mona's life, and he had a right to pay her some attention, and let her see how grateful he was.

All this seemed plausible enough. Yet in the nature of things it could not long satisfy him. Before a month had passed he had wrung from his heart the confession that he loved Dorothy with all the strength of his soul, that she was more to him than all else in the world besides. It might still be true that he loved Mona just as before, and he knew that he would always love her. But not as he loved Dorothy. The love he bore for Mona was of a totally different kind. She was as a sweet, affectionate sister to him, and he felt only too acutely that she could never be more than that.

To a young man who had ideals, and who had been trying to live up to them, this was disappointing, not to say humiliating. He lost confidence in himself. A cynic might put it differently, and say he lost some of his conceit. He was not naturally of the Pharisaic sort; yet he stood well with himself. What young man of twenty-one does not? But there was no denying the fact that in rushing so hurriedly into an engagement with Mona he had played the fool, and was already beginning to pay the penalty of his folly. Also he was playing the fool to still further tune in being so constantly in Dorothy's company.

The result of all this was, that when he was away from Dorothy he was intensely miserable. When he was with her, he forgot everything in the charm of her presence. Her gracious smile was like the opening of the gates of Paradise. Her conversation was as soothing as the music of a stream. But there were days when he did not see her at all—rainy days; days when she was completely occupied with household duties, and he had no excuse for calling; days when the claims of Mona or Pendormic filled up all his time. So it followed that during nine-tenths of his waking hours he dwelt in a wretched little inferno of his own, and alternately cursed his fate and his folly.

Neither Mona nor Dorothy, of course, knew anything of this. Outwardly he was the same as he had always been. If he came a little less to the cottage, Mona knew that he was devoting more time to the affairs of the estate, and was also interesting himself in parish matters, to the great delight of the St. Aubynites.

Dorothy was quite unsuspicious. He was polite and deferential—nothing more. Neither by word nor look did he betray what was in his heart. That his company was very agreeable to her she did not attempt to deny. But since, socially, he was out of her reach, and was, moreover, engaged to be married to his cousin, any thought or suggestion of love was stoutly banished from her mind. She persuaded herself that he was kind to her for Mona's sake—that since she had saved the life of his bride-elect, he felt compelled to pay her some little attention.

As time went on, she owned that these attentions were more and more agreeable. She was conscious, too, that her heart always beat a little faster when she saw him coming to meet her, and later on the grasp of his hand sent a strange and unaccountable thrill through all her nerves. There came to her also a poignant sense of disappointment and loss if two or three days passed without her seeing him, and, what was worse still, a strong temptation assailed her to put herself in his way.

At first she refused to face the logic of all this. But one lovely afternoon in early September the truth suddenly stared her in the face, and almost stopped the beating of her heart. Her aunt had sent her across to Polmewan Farm to inquire after Mrs. Treleven, and leave her some little delicacy she had prepared with her own hands. Dorothy was always pleased to go on an errand of this kind. She liked to play the Lady Bountiful; moreover, it took her into the open air, and in the present case gave her

the opportunity of having a chat with Kitty, which was as good as a sermon any day, not excepting Mr. Smith's.

She was returning homewards across the fields. All around her the golden corn had been cut, and stacked in miniature "mows," which dotted the landscape in all directions. Down in the valley a yellow haze floated, and gave to cottage and farmstead a charming indistinctness, and suggested endless dreamy vistas in which the imagination could play. Beyond the valley, the ground sloped upward in the direction of Pendornic, intersected with belts of trees, and green with ancient pasturages. On reaching the last stile, Dorothy sat down to enjoy the beauty of the scene and the delicious quiet of the afternoon. From distant farmsteads came the sounds of harvesters busy stacking corn. But the sounds were so dreamy and far-away, that they seemed only to accentuate the stillness.

Dorothy took off her hat and threw it on the ground at her feet, and lifted her face to catch the faint cool breeze. Suddenly there fell on her ears the sound of wheels, which came nearer and nearer every moment. She shifted her position a little, so that the hedge might screen her from observation. A moment or two later, Edward Trefusa and Mona drove past. She caught just a momentary glimpse of their faces, lighted up with smiles and sunshine, and then somehow her heart seemed to stop. Such a pang shot through her as she had never felt before, and she grasped the post of the stile and gasped. She saw clearly enough now what she had so long refused to recognise, though why the truth should reveal itself to her in this sudden way she could not understand.

She had often seen Edward Trefusa and Mona driving out together, had often noticed the smiles lighting up his grave, handsome face, and had been struck more than once with his chivalrous attention to his affianced wife. But

the why and wherefore did not trouble her long. It was the fact that gave her so much pain. She had allowed herself—to put it in the mildest way—to care for a man who was engaged to be married to another woman; to care for a man who had never made love to her by word or look, and who, perhaps, in his heart—notwithstanding his politeness—utterly despised her. The thought was maddening, and after a few moments her cheeks began to flame crimson.

“Thank Heaven, no one knows!” she said to herself; “and thank Heaven, no one ever will know! I’ve been a fool not to look at things before. I might have known what I was drifting into, if I had only paused to consider. Did not Walter Smith warn me? Did he not hint with unnecessary plainness the danger that might be? And am I the first poor fly to be caught in the net? But no! I am not caught yet, and, what is more, I will not be caught. I’ve been dreaming for months past, but I am awake now.”

She sat still a few minutes longer, then replaced her hat and walked slowly home. In the hall was a wide-awake clerical hat, which she instantly recognised, and passing with light step the drawing-room door, she rushed quickly upstairs to bathe her face and change her dress.

When a quarter of an hour later she came into the room and greeted Mr. Smith, he fancied that he had never seen her look so beautiful, so bright, so vivacious, so brimming over with life and happiness.

That evening an opportunity occurred that Mr. Smith had long waited for. Directly on their return from chapel Miss Jane complained of a bad headache, and retired at once to her room, leaving Dorothy to entertain their guest till bed-time. Dorothy seemed nothing daunted at the prospect. She appeared to be in the highest spirits, and would not have hesitated to entertain a whole conference of divines.

Mr. Smith in his heart devoutly thanked God for Miss Jane's headache. He was not a hard-hearted young man by any means. But he was in love, and that often makes a man hard-hearted in every direction but one. To Dorothy he expressed the most profound regret at Miss Jane's indisposition.

But Dorothy only smiled at him and shook her head.

"Why do you shake your head, Miss Grey?" he asked, in his most clerical tones.

"Because I fear you are not speaking the truth," she answered gaily.

He looked terribly shocked, as well he might.

"You are surely joking?" he said gravely.

"Oh no; I'm terribly serious," she answered. "You see, I've lived amongst ministers all my life, and know them."

His serious face relaxed into a broad smile.

"That is a very grave statement," he said, "and implies a great deal."

"It only implies that ministers are human, just like other folks—no better and no worse," she answered.

"Exactly; but even then, why should you doubt my sincerity when I expressed my regret at your aunt's indisposition?"

"Just because I know that aunty bores you sometimes. You have to be so painfully proper, so terribly ministerial, when she is about. It amuses me to see how you stand in awe of each other."

"In awe?" he questioned.

"It is not the best word, perhaps," she answered, "but it will answer the purpose. It makes me laugh to see how terribly pious aunty suddenly becomes directly you enter the house, and how pious you become the moment you hang up your hat."

“ Oh ! now I know you are joking,” he said, with a touch of ministerial dignity in his voice.

“ Not at all ! You think Aunt Jane is painfully pious. I know you do, and you accommodate yourself to her mood. She thinks, because you are a minister, you are a great deal more religious than you are, and she accommodates herself to you. I can see it all as plain as a sunbeam.”

“ But, really, Miss Grey——”

“ Now, please, don’t begin to qualify,” she said, laughing. “ It is all right. I’ve lived amongst ministers all my life, and I think I know them pretty well. The only thing that differentiates them—that’s the proper word, I think—from other folks is their clothes.”

“ The only thing, Miss Grey ? I trust not, indeed !”

“ Oh ! you needn’t look so shocked,” she replied. “ I mean by other folks, of course, ordinary respectable church-going people. All the rest is a matter of dress, and that, alas ! reveals an utter lack of the artistic sense.”

“ Now you are cruel !” he said, looking hurt.

“ Not in the least. I’m only a wee bit critical, for, candidly, I can see neither beauty nor fitness in ordinary clerical attire. I should have pitied you during all this summer weather, sweltering under a heavy wide-awake hat, long black coat, and buttoned-up vest, if—if——”

“ If what, Miss Grey ?”

“ Well, if I had not thought you deserved all the discomfort for submitting to the slavery of such a hideous fashion.”

“ Might I be allowed to suggest that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones ?” he said with dignity. “ You will hardly deny that ladies are much more the slaves of fashion than we are.”

“ Are they ?” she questioned, with laughing eyes ; “ I am not so sure of that. But even if it be so, that is no

argument for a lord of creation to use. Two blacks don't make a white. You men ought to be above such things. If you were a poor, weak woman, it would be excusable."

"You admit, then, that ladies are the slaves of fashion?"

"Oh yes; why shouldn't I? We are only following the lead of our superiors, and improving upon it."

"Indeed?"

"Why that tone of incredulity? You will admit, surely, that our attire is occasionally picturesque, and that we do adapt it to times and seasons? You do not see us in heavy black serges in the height of summer."

"Yes, I will grant you are picturesque," he said—"always that; you could not be very well otherwise. And I must say also that the white muslin dresses—or whatever their material may be—which have been so much in evidence this year, are certainly very becoming."

"As becoming as your sombre black?" she questioned mischievously.

"Well, yes, nearly," he said with a smile. "But suppose we change the subject."

"Certainly, if you wish."

For a few minutes there was silence in the room. The minister sat with his head thrown back and his eyes fixed upon the ceiling; his face, however, betrayed nothing. He was a man of strong will, and was not easily moved from his purpose when once his mind was made up. He was wondering to himself how he should begin. To find the right words is often a matter of considerable difficulty. Besides, he was conscious that Dorothy's mood was not altogether favourable to his purpose; she was too gay and light-hearted; she might receive his declaration with laughter, might treat his confession of love as a joke. He must, if possible, lead her thoughts into graver channels; love was not a matter to jest about.

"Did you see Kitty Treleven this afternoon?" he asked at length.

"Oh yes; I had a long chat with her. Isn't she a beautiful woman?"

"She is indeed. Isn't it strange that she has remained single all these years?"

"No, I don't think so. You know her story, of course?"

"Yes, I have heard it."

"And don't you admire her all the more for her constancy?"

"I cannot say. There is something very idyllic about it, certainly. And yet to me it is very pathetic. In a few years she will be left alone in the world!"

"And is that of itself an evil?"

"Often it is. I don't think it is the destiny for which we were intended. 'He setteth the solitary in families,' that is the Divine purpose. 'It is not good for man to be alone.'"

"That is in the Bible, I believe."

"It is. And I regard it as one of those eternal truths that neither time nor circumstances can change."

"I should not go so far as that," she replied, with down-cast eyes.

"I am speaking generally, of course," he answered. "There may be exceptional cases. But as a general principle it holds good for all time."

Dorothy did not reply; and he drew his chair a little nearer, and lowered his voice:

"I have waited a long time for an opportunity to have a little quiet talk with you alone," he said, a little huskily. "And now that the opportunity has come, I am sure you will pardon me taking advantage of it."

What could she say? She could not presume to know

what was coming, though in her heart she had no doubt whatever. So she remained silent.

Her silence gave him encouragement, and he edged his chair yet a little nearer.

For a moment there was an awkward silence, and then he began.

CHAPTER XIII.

“CAN I FORGET THEE?”

“When love begins to sicken and decay,
It useth an enforced ceremony.”

SHAKESPEARE.

DOROTHY slept very little that night. She had listened to Walter Smith's confession of love calmly enough. But ever since her heart had been in a tumult. She had not said No. She had simply asked for time. He had been very manly and outspoken, and yet, withal, exceedingly gentle and considerate. She could not doubt the genuineness of his affection, and she had only admiration for his character as a man.

But—well, there were several “buts” in the case, and they were of sufficient importance to banish nearly all sleep from her eyes. If Mr. Smith had proposed to her two months before, she would probably have said Yes. If he had proposed two days before, she would most certainly have said No. But proposing when he did—a few hours after that strange moment of self-revealing—she did not know what to say.

There were moments when she fancied that her only safety lay in promising to be his wife—she could not help remembering what he said to her that day when they went to the Porth together. There were other moments when

she almost shuddered at the idea. If Edward Trefusa had never crossed her path things would have been different. He had changed the world for her.

Yet to let her thoughts run after him was madness—perhaps worse even than that. But how was she to keep her thoughts at home? What interest could she create, or what interest could be created for her, that would be sufficiently strong to counteract the magnetism of his eyes, the charm of his presence?

“Oh, I might have known,” she moaned to herself, whilst a hot blush swept over her neck and face. “Walter Smith pointed out the danger of his presence clearly enough. Did he guess, I wonder, that I might come under his spell? Oh, fool that I have been! For the last two months I have allowed myself to see him constantly. I have accepted Mona’s friendship for his sake, and have gone to the cottage for the pleasure of seeing him. I’ve been sillier than the fly in the fable. But, thank Heaven, it is not too late to retrace my steps.”

The daylight was creeping in through the blinds before she fell asleep, and when she came downstairs to breakfast she looked positively ill. Walter Smith glanced at her eagerly, but her eyes gave him no answer. After breakfast, finding that her aunt was herself again, she excused herself, and retired to her own room, nor did she venture downstairs again till after the minister had taken his departure.

Walter Smith, however, had taken Miss Jane into his confidence, and wholly enlisted her sympathies, though it should be stated that Miss Jane told him very plainly that she did not consider Dorothy suitable for a minister’s wife.

“But she is a minister’s daughter,” pleaded Mr. Smith.

“And my niece,” interposed Miss Jane. “But, unfortunately, such facts are of no account. Dorothy is a

good girl, a clever girl, and undoubtedly a very handsome girl, but—there's no denying it—she is not spiritually minded. She is fond of dress, fond of pleasure, fond of company."

"We all are, Miss Pendray," the minister replied.

"Then, so much the worse for us. 'To be carnally minded is death,' the Bible says." And Miss Jane put on her most severe expression.

"I am not going to dispute what the Bible says," Mr. Smith answered apologetically, "but I think Dorothy is no worse in that respect than other girls of her age. She is young, and cannot be expected to take very serious views of life. Time sobers most people."

"Yes, that is true—quite true. Dorothy will mend, no doubt. She takes after her mother, and she was a good wife to Mr. Grey, though she never would be a 'class-leader.'"

"I shall not want a wife of mine to be a class-leader," said Mr. Smith sternly. "I shall want her to make a home for me; to be my counsellor and comrade, and not a public fag at the beck and call of every busybody in the church."

"But when a minister's wife can give an exhortation, or speak at a public meeting, it is a great thing," said Miss Jane.

"When she can keep silence in the church it is a much greater thing," was the quick reply.

"But think, Mr. Smith," said Miss Jane aghast, "of the noble women who have done as much good in the circuits as their husbands."

"And neglected their homes and children to do it."

"I did not say that, Mr. Smith."

"But I say it, and can prove it. No, Miss Pendray; I don't want a prating, preaching woman for a wife."

"Ah, well!" said Miss Jane with a sigh; "if those are your views I will say no more. Indeed, I shall be very glad to see you the husband of Dorothy."

"Thank you; I am more hopeful now that I know you are on my side."

Dorothy spent a very miserable three or four days, and then she took her aunt into her confidence, not having the least suspicion that Mr. Smith had confided in her previously. Miss Jane listened with a little pretence of surprise until Dorothy had finished. Then, gently touching her curls on either side, she said gravely:

"You ought to feel yourself highly honoured, Dorothy. Mr. Smith is a very good man, and is likely to make his mark in the Connexion."

"I do not doubt that," was the reply; "yet I am afraid I do not care for him sufficiently to be his wife."

"You do care for him, then?"

"As a friend, very much."

"You have nothing against him?"

"On the contrary, I very much admire him."

"No one else has made love to you?"

"Indeed no, aunty."

"It would make me very happy to see you his wife, for he is a good man."

"You mean that?"

"I was never more in earnest, my child."

Dorothy said no more, but went straight away to her own room and sat down to write. She felt that her first business was to tear the image of Edward Trefusa from her heart, and she fancied that the best way to do that was to erect another image in its place. She had not spoken to him now for nearly a week, and had not seen him since that afternoon when he rode past with Mona

"I think aunty is right," she said, dipping her pen in the ink, and then looking abstractedly out of the window. "Mr. Smith is exceedingly nice, and—and I have been very foolish. However, that is at an end now. I will tell him at any rate that he can come to the house, but there need not be a definite engagement for a month or two."

She had just finished her letter and sealed it, when a tap came to the door.

"Come in," she said, without turning her head.

The next moment the housemaid's face appeared.

"Please, Miss Dorothy," she said, "young Mr. Trefusa is downstairs, and Miss Pendray wants to know if you be comin' down."

Dorothy's face blanched suddenly, but she did not even turn her head.

"Ask my aunt," she said quite calmly, "to excuse me. I am not feeling very well this afternoon."

"Yes, mum;" and the maid closed the door and departed.

"This comes of declining Mona's invitation yesterday," Dorothy said to herself with a pained look in her eyes. "I suppose he has called to inquire if I am better. It is a most unusual thing to do."

Then she sat back in her chair and looked out of the window; but she saw nothing. It was a lovely bit of landscape that stretched away in the distance, but she had no eyes for external things. She was doing battle with her own heart, trying to curb her feelings, and making a desperate effort to reason herself into a condition of calm indifference.

In the room below she heard the faint murmur of a man's voice, and somehow it seemed to set all her nerves to music. She wanted to go downstairs and join in the conversation. It was so rarely that a gentleman called (excepting, of course, the travelling preachers) that it seemed a shame not to be able to see one when he did call. And, then, Edward

Trefusa was one in a thousand, and he had always been kind to her, and had never put on airs. It seemed a stupid thing, after all, to refuse to see him. She heard his voice in the hall a little later, and it brought back the colour to her cheek, and made her heart throb faster than before.

"He's going now," she said to herself, "and I shall not see him. I know it's best I should not. Until I get over this silly weakness I will keep out of sight. Perhaps he will think I am really ill, or he may think I am offended about something. But it does not matter what he thinks. He's never likely to know the truth, and that's a comfort. There! he's gone now. I can see him if I look out of the window. I may do that, surely. No, I won't, though. I will cure myself of this folly, whatever it may cost me;" and she shut her eyes and locked her hands tightly together, and sat perfectly still.

Two days later, Miss Jane, standing at the window, remarked, "The young squire seems to lead a much more active life than he used to do. This is the third time this week he has ridden by on horseback."

"Has he ridden past this afternoon?" Dorothy asked, without looking up from her work.

"He's only this minute gone by. Didn't you see me bow to him?"

"No, aunty, I was not looking your way."

"He seems to notice everybody. He's not a bit like his grandfather."

Dorothy did not make any reply to this, but a few minutes later she went upstairs and put on her hat, and then went out alone.

"He will be away for the rest of the afternoon," she reflected, "so I shall be safe in calling at the cottage." And in this surmise she was right.

Mona was delighted to see her, and they spent the whole afternoon rambling about the park. Dorothy was very quiet, but Mona was full of life and vivacity, and talked incessantly. Edward's birthday was to be celebrated during the first week in October, and there were to be great rejoicings at Pendormic.

"Grandfather would like us to be married at the same time," Mona said, with the faintest suggestion of a blush, "but mother will not hear of it. She wants us to wait, at any rate, till the new year."

"Yes?" Dorothy said in a questioning tone.

"You know, I do not see why we need be married for years to come. I am quite happy as I am, and I see just as much of Ted as I want to."

"Do you?" Dorothy questioned, with a suggestion of surprise in her voice.

"Quite as much. In fact, he bothers me sometimes. You see, he will talk to me about things I don't understand a bit. I *do* try to understand, you know, and I pretend to be interested when I am not, but it's dreadfully fatiguing at times."

"Is it?" Dorothy asked quietly, but in the same tone of surprise.

"Don't you think you would find it so if you were in my place?" Mona questioned with a laugh.

"I don't know. I don't——" And then she stopped abruptly.

"You don't what?" Mona questioned, after a pause.

"Well, I don't think we can answer very well for other people."

"No, I suppose not. And, then, you are clever. You know all about books—and—and everything, while I'm just a little goose and don't know anything. But I tell Edward he knows enough for both of us."

So Mona talked gaily and unconcernedly, while Dorothy listened with a questioning light in her great brown eyes.

Edward did not call at the cottage after his return that afternoon; had he done so, he would have found Dorothy still there. He was not in the humour, however, for Mona's company. So he shut himself up in the library and tried to read. For the best part of an hour he struggled bravely, but he was too restless and ill at ease to take the least interest in any subject. So he shut the book at length with a snap, flung it on the table, and began to pace up and down the room. His little hell was getting hotter every day. He had gone out that afternoon hoping he might see Dorothy, and he had returned feeling bitterly disappointed. More than a week had elapsed since he had looked upon her face, and he felt as though he could not endure it any longer. Life without a sight of Dorothy now and then was not worth living.

He knew as well as anyone that he had no right to love Dorothy. But what was the use of debating the question? Rightly or wrongly, he *did* love her, and there was an end of it. Nor was that all; absence, instead of cooling his love, only intensified it. Every day the hunger of his heart increased, and was growing into a perfect agony.

When he called at the cottage next day Mona began at once with an account of Dorothy's visit the previous afternoon.

"Was Miss Grey here yesterday?" he asked excitedly.

"Of course she was. Why did you not come across to see her?"

"Because I was a fool," his heart said. His lips intimated that he was otherwise engaged.

"You are nearly always busy nowadays," she said archly. "But I don't think we missed you. You see, girls have always such a lot to talk about."

"Was Miss Grey in a very talkative humour?"

"I think so. Oh yes, she must have been. I know we were chattering like two magpies all the afternoon."

"Then, I presume she is better?"

"Better? She has not been unwell, that I know of."

"I thought she had been, perhaps. I have not seen her about for a considerable time. I suppose she went home early?"

"Oh no; she stayed quite late. It must have been eight o'clock when she left."

Edward did not say any more, but he felt a great deal, and during the rest of his stay he did not bore Mona with matters she was not interested in.

The following day being Sunday, Edward did what he had long wanted to do, but had refrained from, out of deference to his grandfather—that is, he went to the Methodist chapel. In the morning he went as usual to church, and was accompanied by Mona and her mother. But in the evening he stole off into the village unobserved, and arrived at the chapel during prayer. The doorkeeper, recognising the late-comer, showed him at once into a pew behind the door. So it happened that not five people observed him, or were aware of his presence.

The prayer ended, the preacher announced an anthem, the first part of which was a solo, and was taken by Dorothy. The congregation sat while this was being rendered. Edward had no idea that Dorothy was in the choir. The most he had hoped for was that he might catch a glimpse of her face. Hence, when the first rich notes of her voice floated out over the hushed congregation, he caught his breath suddenly, and felt his flesh creep to the soles of his feet. She stood with the side of her face toward him, her eyes raised to one of the windows, through which the yellow light of evening streamed.

“ Can I forget thee, O Jerusalem ?
Can I forget thee ? ”

her solo began—a tender, plaintive melody, that stole out over the congregation like the wail of a broken heart. It was clear to everyone that Dorothy entered fully into the spirit of the song. Without effort, without a single thought of those who were listening, her voice rose and fell, awaking a thousand memories in the hearts of the little band of worshippers, and bringing the tears to many weary eyes.

Her solo ended, the chorus joined in. But even then Edward heard no voice but Dorothy's. He closed his eyes and followed it as it threaded its way among the others, always pure and true, and possessing a quality that none of the others could boast.

It had grown quite dark by the time the service closed, and Edward stole away at once as unobserved as he came. He felt not a little ashamed of himself. His motive was not worthy of the time or place. He had gone, not to worship, but simply to see Dorothy. In this respect he had been more than repaid. He had not only seen her, he had heard her, and her singing had banished everything else.

What the sermon was about he did not know. He heard the preacher talking, but he paid no heed to what he said. He scarcely once looked at him. His eyes were upon Dorothy all the time, and through all the sermon the clear tones of her voice seemed to ring :

“ Can I forget thee, O Jerusalem ?
Can I forget thee ? ”

Alone in the quiet lane that led to Pendormic, he still heard her singing. The very air seemed to throb with the music of her voice. And later still, when in the solitude of his own room, and sleep was stealing over him, he had a vague recollection of raising his hand and crying out :

“ Can I forget thee, Dorothy ? Never ! never ! ”

CHAPTER XIV.

COMING OF AGE.

“ Time the shuttle drives, but you
Give to every thread its hue,
And elect your destiny.”

BURLEIGH.

EDWARD'S birthday was celebrated in the most approved fashion. Old Peter, for once in his lifetime, opened his heart ; or, at least, he unloosed his purse-strings, and provided such a feast as was never before seen in the parish of St. Aubyn. A tent was erected on the lawn large enough, it was said, to accommodate all the people living within a radius of five miles (but that was an exaggeration ; people are apt to exaggerate at such times). That such a tent had never before been seen in the parish was quite true. It was supplied by a Plymouth contractor, and was in itself a sight never to be forgotten. The catering was worthy of the tent and the occasion. Apocryphal stories are told even to-day of the number of sheep and oxen that were slaughtered, and of the prodigious quantity of saffron cake that was consumed during the afternoon. No one thought of doing any work that day, for practically everybody was invited to the merry-making. Ostensibly the feast was for the Pendormic tenants, but the line was a very elastic one. Almost anyone residing in the parish of St. Aubyn could

have a ticket for the asking; and since diffidence was not a distinguishing feature of the people generally, very few were left out in the cold.

Fortunately it was the slack season. The corn had been "mowed" long since, and a good deal of it threshed. The wheat arishes had been "turned down to rot." Most of the potatoes had been dug, and all the sheep had been sheared. And since the weather kept fine, there was no press of work in any direction. There was not a farmer in the parish that begrudged a holiday to his hands. Such work as there was could easily wait. And a public feast was not something that happened every day. By five o'clock in the morning young men were busy erecting triumphal arches, and girls might be found putting the finishing touches to new dresses. At six o'clock the bells began to ring, and such a peal as was rarely heard. Old people said it felt like Christmas time, except for the weather, which was as warm as spring. By seven o'clock "standings" were springing up in all directions, on which, later in the day, nuts, and ginger-bread, and long sticks of peppermint rock, twisted and coloured, and carved at the end like walking-sticks, were temptingly displayed. At eight o'clock sharp, the local brass band marched through the fore-street of St. Aubyn playing "When Johnny comes marching home again," with variations. And at nine o'clock everybody had turned out to see what was going on.

The dinner was announced for one o'clock, which, most people felt, was at least an hour too late. The universal dinner-hour was at noon, and to be compelled to wait an hour beyond that seemed positively cruel, but there was no help for it. The ways of gentry were not like those of ordinary folks, and in the present case they would have to be submitted to.

Long before the clock struck twelve, groups of loiterers in

holiday garb—of remarkable cut and fit—were seen moving slowly towards Pendormic. Now and then they would stop and set up a target, and fling stones at it. It was one way of killing time, and somehow time travelled very slowly to-day. Moreover, the pangs of hunger were becoming somewhat acute. They had breakfasted early and sparingly, so that they might do justice to the squire's feast. It would ill become them to appear on the scene without appetites.

On the stroke of noon the first loiterers slouched through the lodge gates, though there had been considerable parleying as to who should take the lead. A dozen of them had stood in a group chewing straws, shying occasional stones nowhere in particular, and discussing in undertones the situation.

"Thee go fust," said Abel Beswarrick to Ezekiel Cobbledick.

"Go first thyself," said Ezekiel, picking a straw from the hedge and nibbling at it.

"Ain't we better wait till some of the big varmers go in?" said Caleb Pengolly, with a furtive glance at the lodge windows.

"Ef we doo we'll 'ave to wait a long time," said 'Lijah Mounter. "The more gentrified people think themselves row-days, the later they do come."

"But it must be near the time," said a hungry-looking youth, sidling to the front. "It seems ages and ages agone since I 'ad anything to ait."

"Git away, 'Siah; thee'rt always in a hurry for thy mails," snorted Abel.

"And looks as if he was feeded on bran-tubs," sniggered 'Lijah Mounter.

"I'm as fat as you any day," retorted 'Siah. "I was six score vourteen laast Summercourt fair."

"Six score nawthin', more likely," chimed in Caleb

Pengolly. "A good-sized ox 'ud clunk (swallow) thee, bones an' all, and know nawthin' 'bout it."

"Look at 'ome," retorted 'Siah. "If I were such a bag o' bones as thee I'd hang myself—there now!"

"We're a set ov buffleheads, the lot ov us," said Ezekiel Cobbledick. "Why don't we make for the denner and get done with it?"

"What I'm most anxious 'bout es to begin wi' it," sniggered 'Siah. "I shaan't be in no hurry to 'ave done wi' it when wance I do make a start."

"If thee gits there fust there waan't be noan left for noan of we," said Caleb. "I propose us do go through vour abreast."

"Agreed," said the others.

And four abreast they marched through, feeling like warriors who had gained a great victory.

Their example was quickly followed by other loiterers further back on the road, and when once the procession was fairly on the move, there seemed no end to it.

For special guests, "the clergy and gentry," a lunch was served in the big dining-room. These special guests received their invitation by post, and formally acknowledged the receipt of the same. Miss Jane, who was one of the honoured ones, was considerably puzzled by the letters R.S.V.P. printed at the bottom of the card. She was quite unused to such invitations, and did not remember seeing these mystic letters before.

"I wish Dorothy would come down to breakfast," she said impatiently. "I feel quite flustered. I wonder what I shall wear! Of course, I shall have to go. I hope Dorothy won't feel slighted at being left out. Dear me! *this is an event.*"

Dorothy had been already downstairs, and had taken her letters back to her own room, and was now sitting with

Edward Trefusa's letter which accompanied the invitation lying on her lap, and her eyes fixed on a distant sweep of hills visible through the window.

She did not see the hills. She saw nothing, in fact. She was thinking hard, and trying to feel calm and unconcerned. She was not a little angry with herself that Edward Trefusa's letter should have moved her so strangely. There was nothing in it that anyone might not read. It was a simple, straightforward request that she would not fail to come, that Mona would be terribly disappointed if she did not, and that they would both endeavour to make the day a very pleasant one to her.

Yet, somehow, brief and direct as the message was, it stirred her heart like a psalm. She had been singled out for special favour. Edward Trefusa, in all probability, had written to no one else. But why this special mark of consideration? Why had he not got Mona to write the note? And why—and why?

Oh, there were so many "whys." He had called at the house, he had even been to their chapel, he had sent kind inquiries through her aunt, whom he had met in the street, and a dozen other things, nothing in themselves, but which, grouped together, must have some significance, for they all tended in the same direction. Could it be possible that he meant evil? Was Walter Smith right in his surmises?

How long she might have sat there, it is impossible to tell, had not Ann come to tell her that the breakfast was getting cold, and that Miss Pendray was growing very impatient.

"I thought you were never coming," was Miss Jane's greeting.

"I'm very sorry. I did not know it was so late," Dorothy replied, and then silence fell.

Before the meal was concluded, however, the Pendormic

invitation was discussed "all ends up," as Miss Jane afterwards expressed it. Indeed, very little else was talked about during the rest of the day.

"Of course you must go, Dorothy," Miss Jane said, as soon as Dorothy told her of her own invitation. "It wouldn't be at all respectful for you to decline."

"I think I would much rather stay at home," Dorothy said. "I'm not a native, you know."

"But, my dear, it might give great offence if you purposely stayed away; and you know the Trefusas are very important people;" and Miss Jane walked up to the glass and arranged her curls.

"Very good, aunty: you can include me in your reply," Dorothy said at length. "We need not both write."

Dorothy's indecision, however, did not forsake her. Had she consulted her feelings merely, she would not have hesitated a moment, but, taking all other things into account, she thought it more than likely that she would be happier away. During the last two or three weeks she had not spoken to Edward Trefusa. She had been fighting a stubborn battle with herself, and had the satisfaction of knowing that she had been steadily gaining the victory. But if she went to Pendormic it might mean having to fight all the battle over again. Moreover, Walter Smith had to be considered. It is true she had not given him any definite promise; on the other hand, she had not discouraged his attentions, and, on the whole, she was disposed to accept his offer as the only way out of the difficulty. By marrying the minister she would soon be far enough away from Pendormic, and, of course, would quickly forget the young squire and the foolish fancy that had tormented her so terribly during a few brief months.

So the days passed on till the morning of the feast. Dorothy was awaked by the clashing of the bells and the

unusual clatter of feet and hum of voices outside. She never realized till that day what an important personage Edward Trefusa was, nor to what an extent the destinies of the people lay in his hands.

Abel Beswarrick and his companions were the first to arrive at the Hall, and were immediately welcomed by Edward and Mona. The former shook hands with everybody, and the latter distributed her smiles to all alike.

Peter hobbled to and fro, and smiled and frowned by turns. But he condescended to shake hands only with one here and there. He did not believe in making too free with his tenants.

By the time dinner was in full swing, the aristocracy of the neighbourhood began to arrive, and Edward kept a sharp look-out for Dorothy. He had been very much disappointed that Miss Jane had replied for both. He had expected a little note in Dorothy's handwriting, which he meant to keep always among his treasures. Still, it was a great satisfaction to him to know that his invitation had been accepted, and that he would have another opportunity of talking with Dorothy face to face. For the last fortnight he had puzzled himself considerably over the cause or causes that had kept them apart. Were they purely accidental, or had Dorothy purposely avoided him? He intended having an explanation to-day.

At length he espied Miss Jane and Mona in earnest conversation, and his heart gave a great bound. Dorothy had arrived at last, and he hurried through the crowd of guests, not doubting that she was somewhere near.

Mona met him with a blank expression of countenance.

"Dorothy hasn't come," she said; "isn't it a shame?"

"Not come?" he questioned incredulously.

"She is not at all well," Miss Jane explained, coming

forward. "She seemed all right this morning. But those distressing headaches come on very suddenly."

"I am very sorry," he said, after a pause; and then he hurried away to speak to some fresh arrivals.

But after that moment it seemed to him somehow as if the sky had become suddenly overcast. He knew that it was only what he deserved; that he had no right to love Dorothy after he had become engaged to Mona. But that did not assuage the pain and disappointment in the smallest degree, but rather accentuated them. He went in and out among the guests as usual, and laughed and chatted, and appeared unusually gay; but his heart felt like lead, and could he have followed his wishes, he would have slunk away somewhere out of sight, and bitten his nails in anger and chagrin.

It was clear enough to him now that Dorothy purposely avoided him. Evidently she saw through him, and meant to save him from himself. Most likely she despised him for not being in heart more loyal to Mona. Or—it was a horrible thought, and made him wince—she might regard him as an evil-minded man.

Fortunately for Edward, the proceedings of the day were practically without ceremony. It was a general "at home" in the open air, and everyone was at liberty to do pretty much what he or she liked. Of course, he had to make a speech; that was inevitable. It was getting toward sundown when an old farmer mounted a chair, and proposed the health of the young squire.

This was the signal for a great outburst of cheering, and the singing of "For he's a jolly good fellow," during which Farmer Body mounted a second chair for the purpose of 'seconding the proposition."

But Farmer Jory, who was first in the field, declared that he "'adn't finished perposin' it," and requested Farmer Body to sit down.

"'Twoulden be vitty ef I dedn make a bit ov a spaich," he continued, "in rising up to do a job like this. Not that I'm much ov a spaicher, for I baan't a 'Local,' but I do know what's what for oal that, an' I do say that Maister Edward be of the right soart. He do know we when we do mitin, and he do spaik to we like a man and a gentleman. I do say to my missus lots ov times, 'Mawther,' says I, 'Maister Edward do know 'ow to behave, he do; he ain't nawthin' like a lot ov the stuek-up trade who cock their noses so 'igh that they don't see nobody.' 'A man's a man for oal that,' John Wesley zays in the hymn-book, or may be it's in the Prayer-book. Any'ow, them's my sentiments to a nicety, an' I do zay further that I 'ope he waan't go in for no rent-raising, for us be overdone that way already; but ef he'll take a bit hoff 'ere an' there we'll like 'n all the more; we will, an' that's a fact." This sentiment was greeted with tremendous cheering, during which Farmer Jory cleared his throat, and smiled in a way that indicated that he was very well pleased with himself. When the applause had subsided he went on again: "Ef I don't do this job vitty, frien's, you must furgive me; but I main well, an' I can tell the young squire as he ain't got in St. Aubyn no better well-wisher than Jeremiah Jory. An' I'd like to zay also, afore I've done with this job, that us be all very well plaised to 'ear that there's likely soon to be a missus in Pendormic. Bless 'er, I do zay, for she es a little beauty, and there's no denyin' it!" This brought the enthusiasm to a climax, and round after round of cheering echoed across the lawn. "An' now, frien's," continued Jeremiah, "fur fear I should spoil it oal ef I do zay any more, I'll stop, with 'Ears to the 'ealth of the young squire."

Adam Body was on his chair in a moment.

"I do rise," he said, "to second that proposition, an' I do it with great pleasure—there now! There ain't no

denyin' that friend Jory have made a most hexallent speech. We oal on us like the young people, boath on 'em. We wish 'em 'appiness, an' 'ealth, an' prosperity, so long as they doan't raise the rents. I'd made a bit ov a spaich, but frien' Jory's heloquence have knocked it oal out ov me—took the wind out ov my sails, as it were. But we've 'ad a good feed, there ain't no denying that, an' we've enjoyed it—least-ways, I 'ave. An' we shall oal go 'ome wishin' 'ealth to the young squire an' his bonny bride as is to be, an' we 'ope they waan't forgit us at the weddin'. Amen." And Farmer Body stepped off the chair as suddenly as he had mounted it.

Edward would have escaped the task of replying had it been possible. He had had no practice yet in public speaking. Moreover, he had nothing to say except to thank them for their expression of goodwill, and he felt for the moment that he had no words wherewith to do that.

"Get up, lad, and say thy say!" said his grandfather at his elbow. "But"—and he lowered his voice to a whisper—"make no promises about rents."

Edward mounted the chair, and while the people cheered he glanced slowly round him. The sun had set, but the burnished western sky lighted up the eager, weather-beaten faces of the circling crowd. Suddenly he started and turned pale. There was one face that flashed upon him for a moment that did not belong to St. Aubyn. He looked again, but it was hidden behind a forest of heads; yet the momentary glimpse he got of those small, half-shut eyes sent a cold shiver down his back. The clue that had eluded him weeks before suddenly dawned upon him now. It was Dan, of Goolong Creek. Why had he come? What did he want? What did his coming portend?

Fortunately someone started to sing "For he's a jolly good fellow," which gave Edward an opportunity of recovering himself.

CHAPTER XV.

A REVELATION.

“An evil soul producing holy witness,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.”

SHAKESPEARE.

JUST as Edward was closing his speech, Dan showed his face again, and a swift glance of recognition passed between them.

“The young dog knows me after all these years,” Dan grunted to himself, and his small eyes became almost invisible. “So much the better. Every point gained is a step nearer the end. It’s been a slow game, but I’ve reached the last card in the trick; before midnight I calculate I shall have won the rubber;” and he rubbed his hands with an air of satisfaction.

A few minutes later Edward stood before him with flushed cheeks and a troubled look in his eyes.

“Dan,” he said; “I thought I could not be mistaken.”

“You’ve a good memory, Master Edie,” was the reply. “But you were always a sharp lad.”

“Thank you. But what brought you here?”

“I came to see you, and to offer my humble congratulations among the rest.”

“It is very kind of you.”

"I hope so." And the restless eyes gleamed like tiny points of light.

"But you've been here before."

"Once. I was curious to see what sort of shop you had got. Better than Goolong Creek, eh?"

Edward looked at him steadily for a moment, and grew still more uneasy. He had thought well of Dan in the old days, but for some reason he did not like him now. There was a sinister look in his small gray eyes that irritated him, a smile upon the thin straight lips that, whether intended to be friendly or no, seemed almost malignant.

"We cannot talk here in view of all these people," Edward said at length; "and I have a great many questions I would like to ask you."

"And I have a few I wish to put to you," was the cool reply.

"Very good. Our guests, you see, are beginning to leave already. In less than an hour they will have all departed. Come to the house at nine o'clock; I will leave word for you to be shown into the library. You understand?"

"I think so;" and he turned on his heel and sauntered away.

Edward looked after him and felt almost angry. The man's coolness verged on impertinence. What right had he to presume, as he appeared to be doing, on a past acquaintance? Had he not been so anxious to gain some tidings of his foster-father and Ned, he certainly would not have invited him to the house.

Mona was waiting for him on the terrace.

"You made a very good speech, Ted," she said, looking proudly into his face. "But, then, you do everything well; but who is that man you have been talking to ever since?"

"An old Australian acquaintance. Have you ever heard me speak of Dan of Goolong Creek?"

"I don't know. I think so ; but I don't remember very distinctly."

"Well, at any rate, he was our foreman when we lived on the ranch. He used to nurse me and Ned when we were babies, and we grew to be very fond of him."

"Indeed ! He does not look a very likeable sort of individual."

"It struck me while I was speaking to him just now that he hadn't improved with keeping. But when I was a lad, I assure you, I thought a great deal of him."

"And why has he come here ?"

"For the sake of old times, mainly, I expect. Having known me as a lad, he will, very naturally, be interested in me as a man. At least, I presume that is so."

"I expect he wants to get something out of you," Mona said with a laugh. "He doesn't look a particularly disinterested mortal. But would you mind walking with me to the cottage ? Mother went home an hour ago."

"What a question, Mona ! Do you imagine that a walk with you has ceased to be a pleasure to me ?"

"Oh no, Ted ; I never imagined such a thing for a moment," she answered with a gay laugh. "Only I know how busy you are, and you might not think I wanted to go home yet."

"I am sure you must be tired," he said. "It has been a fatiguing day for us all, and, between ourselves, I am heartily glad it is over."

"And yet, Ted, I have enjoyed myself immensely. It's been such a pleasure to see how happy everyone has been. I don't think there's any pleasure so nice as giving pleasure to other people."

"Then, what a lot of pleasure you must get, Mona !"

"I do get a lot, Ted. I consider myself a very happy girl."

“ But you expect to be happier some day ? ”

“ No ; I’m afraid I don’t,” she said, smiling at him winsomely. “ I should be quite content to remain as I am always.”

“ Then, you are not anxious to be married ? ”

“ Why should I be, Ted ? Why should either of us be ? We see each other every day, and we have very few cares.”

They were walking across the park in the deepening shadow of the trees. In the still autumnal air came faintly the sounds of laughter and song, as the merry-makers made their way homewards—the younger portion to join their sweethearts and continue the festivities for an hour or two longer in the streets of St. Aubyn.

Edward paused for a moment and listened, then continued his walk by Mona’s side.

Were these young men, he wondered, happier than he ? They courted the girls they loved, and who loved them in return ; while he and Mona, through the force of circumstances, had drifted into an engagement that was more a matter of family arrangement than anything else. It was clear to him now that Mona’s heart remained untouched by love’s great passion. She cared for him as a brother, loved him as a friend, nothing more ; while he, God help him ! loved another woman madly. Too late he had discovered what true love means ; too late he had come into that presence which waked all his life to music.

For several minutes they walked on in silence. Once or twice he looked at her, but their eyes did not meet. She was looking off into the swiftly-gathering darkness, thinking pleasant thoughts, perhaps, in which he had no part. Yet he was not troubled by her comparative indifference. They were evenly matched ; she loved him as much as he loved her, only there was this difference : she had no secret love affair of her own.

He left her at the garden-gate, kissing her twice on brow and cheek; and at the door she threw him a parting kiss with her hand; this was in token of gratitude. Had he been more demonstrative she would have given him less. She went gaily into the house, singing as she went. He turned gloomily towards the hall, with a strange foreboding in his heart.

It was quite dark when he mounted the terrace steps, and when he reached the top he leaned against one of the pillars that supported the heavy stone portico, and looked off into the night.

The last of the merry-makers had gone. Even the tent had been taken down. The events of the day seemed already like a dream to him. He had heard his name praised and his virtues extolled, had received an amount of homage that at one time would have almost turned his head; and yet, somehow, everything seemed worthless and empty. He was the heir of estates that were the envy of the county. But the thought brought him no pleasure. A quiet cottage somewhere with Dorothy seemed to him just then of more worth than all the treasures of the world.

But, alas! Dorothy was not for him, and he sighed wearily.

Dorothy shunned him, despised him, perhaps, or, worse still, thought evil of him. Nor could he complain if such were the case. He had played the fool, and fools deserved to pay the penalty of their folly.

Punctually at nine o'clock Dan Spear presented himself, and was shown into the library. For a moment or two he looked round the spacious and lofty apartment with an air of bewilderment.

"By gum!" he muttered at length, "this is a caution. All these books mean money—loads of it! There'll be no

end to the boy's wealth when the old 'un kicks the bucket, and that's bound to happen pretty soon now. The old skinflint looks tough, it is true, but he can't live for ever. Well, well, I must play my cards accordingly. A thousand or two more or less is a mere flea-bite. To play low in a case like this would be folly." And he drew up an easy-chair before the fire. "By gum!" he continued, as he stretched out his legs, "this is what I call comfort. The boy's dropped into a nice thing, and no two ways about it. I wish I'd been the lucky baby. However, as I wasn't, I must go in for the next best thing—a share of the spoils." And he smiled grimly.

"I wonder how long he is going to keep me waiting," he said, after a long pause. "He evidently ain't got no suspicion. But hold! here he comes." And the next moment the door was thrown open and Edward entered.

Dan rose slowly to his feet and bowed.

"I feel a bit out of place in a swell shop like this," he began, "and if I don't do the correct thing you must excuse me. At Goolong Creek things were different, eh?"

"Slightly, no doubt. But pray be seated. I asked you to call, so that I might get some Australian news. You will have seen Mr. Fowey recently, no doubt, and Ned?"

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Edie, but I've no news about 'em at all."

"You have not seen them lately, then?"

"Never since they left Goolong Creek."

"Oh, I am sorry. I quite anticipated hearing all about them."

"You must go to some other quarter, then. I came on an entirely different matter."

Edward started and looked at him. "I do not quite understand," he said.

"Likely not; but you will directly," was the insolent answer.

"Indeed!" and Edward's brow darkened in a moment.

"Don't be impatient," Dan said, with a sinister smile.

"You see, I was in at the beginning of this business."

"What business do you refer to?"

"Why, the swapping of babies, of course."

"The what?"

"I don't think I need repeat it," was the cool reply.

"You think you are Edward Trefusa's son. Let me tell you, then, you are nothing of the sort; you are the son of Abram Fowey."

Had the man fired a pistol, Edward could not have been more startled. For a moment he staggered and turned deathly pale; but he recovered himself with remarkable quickness, and walking toward the fireplace, he leaned his elbow on the end of the mantelpiece.

"You say I am Abram Fowey's son?" he questioned. And his voice did not betray the smallest trace of emotion.

"I do."

"And you are prepared to prove it?"

"To the very hilt."

"This is interesting. Perhaps you are ready to go into the matter at once?"

"As soon as you like."

"You are certainly obliging."

Dan winced. This coolness rather disconcerted him. He knew he was playing a bold game. Had this young man, after all, an unsuspected card up his sleeve?

"You do not seem greatly troubled at the news," Dan said.

"I am not troubled in the least," was the answer.

"You think I cannot prove it?"

"On the contrary, I think it very possible you can."

Dan grew pale. This was anything but a promising beginning. To levy blackmail upon a man who seemed so utterly indifferent would not be an easy matter. However, he had let out the secret, and so he would have to go through with the business to the end.

"I should not have come to England for nothing, Master Edie, you may depend," he said, after an awkward pause.

"It would have cost less to have written," was the reply.

"But I did not want to write, you see. With the exception of your father, I was the only one that knew the secret. It was carefully planned, as you yourself will admit, and carefully carried out. The exchange was made, not at Goolong Creek, where Betty and I would have seen through the business in a moment. Your father went away where no one knew you; but, you see, I guessed what he was up to long before, and when I saw you at Melbourne with that lawyer, I knew in a moment what had been done."

"And why did you not tell the lawyer there and then, and so have prevented so great a wrong?"

"Why? Why should I? I could afford to wait. Moreover, the secret is safe with me. I only want a consideration for keeping it."

"Oh, I see."

"I don't think you will find me unreasonable. Your father only did what I should have done in his place. Old Peter cheated him out of Briar Nook, and has drawn the rents for nigh thirty years, and banished your father all these years from his native land. In you, the Foweyes 'll get their own back again, with compound interest. It's God A'mighty's judgment, I call it, an' I wouldn't be the one to upset it."

"Then, why have you revealed the secret to me?"

"Why? Well, Master Edie, I thought I'd made that plain enough already. I want, say, a trifle of three hundred

a year. It ain't nothing with a rent-roll like yours. If I was some men, I should ask a great deal more. But I'm single, and my wants are few."

"You are a modest man, Dan, I will admit," Edward said, with a laugh. "But you have not proved your case yet."

"I've suggested motive, ain't I?"

"Yes, I will admit that."

"And you'll agree, I reckon, that Abram Fowey's conduct can be explained only in one way?"

"What conduct do you refer to?"

"Why, all his conduct. The bringing of you two boys up in ignorance. The going away from Goolong Creek when the swap had to be made."

"But that is not evidence."

"No; but it explains things, all the same. If he didn't intend to make a swap, he acted like a fool. Besides, I've got the trump cards yet. Betty know'd which was which, you'll admit that?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've got her sworn affidavit."

"You have? Let me see it."

"All in good time, Master Edie, for there's more to follow. You don't remember Dr. Spence, of Rokerstown, very likely?"

"No."

"Well, I do; he vaccinated both of you; was in at your births as well. He was also with Trefusa when he died."

"Well?"

"Well, you want evidence; I've got it. He says as how Mrs. Fowey was left-handed, and always nursed her baby on her right arm. Consequently he had to vaccinate her baby on his right arm—a most unusual thing to do. If you've got the vaccination marks on your left arm, you know that you're not Fowey's son; but if the marks are on your right arm, why, then you know who you are."

"And you have this evidence in black and white?"

"Exactly. Do you think I should come all this way on a fool's errand?"

Edward bit his lip, and was silent. He had no wish to discuss the question further; everything was as clear to him as sunshine. The things that had puzzled him for months and years were plain enough now. The conclusion was inevitable. With the swiftness of lightning his brain swept the whole field of motive and conduct; memory supplied a hundred points of confirmation. The presumptive evidence alone was sufficient to confirm any unprejudiced mind, while the direct evidence was overwhelming.

Dan watched him narrowly, and his small eyes gleamed. "I'm sorry to be a kind of skeleton at the feast," he said at length; "but, you know, in this world it's everyone for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. Still, I don't want to be troublesome. I can be as secret as death, and will be, provided, of course, you agree to my proposals, which I don't think you can consider unreasonable. You can live on here in peace and quietness with the wife of your bosom, as it were, and laugh in your sleeve at the little game of double-shuffle: how, in the first instance, the Trefusas evicted the Foweyes, and how prettily in the end the Foweyes evicted the Trefusas;" and Dan smiled benignly at the clever way he had stated the case.

Edward felt himself grow hot all over. To listen to such talk made his flesh creep; to stay a moment longer in the room, knowing that he was an impostor, was impossible.

Without a word he turned toward the door.

"Hold!" said Dan, starting to his feet; "you agree, of course, to my proposal?"

"I'll be with you again in a minute," was the answer; and the next moment the door closed behind him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS.

"We seek but half the causes of our deeds,
Seeking them only in the outer life,
And heedless of the encircling spirit-world,
Which, though unseen, is felt, and sows in us
All germs of pure and world-wide purposes."

SEWELL.

"WONDER what the young devil means?" Dan muttered to himself, as he dropped limply back into his chair. "He surely will not be such a born idiot as to throw up the sponge? Good Lord, what am I to do if he shows the white feather?" and Dan mopped his forehead with a red pocket-handkerchief, and felt terribly hot and uncomfortable.

Meanwhile, Edward had gone in search of his grandfather. He had quite made up his mind what to do. No sooner was he convinced of the substantial truthfulness of Dan's story than he had decided upon his course of action. There was no hesitancy in forming his purpose, no hesitancy in carrying it out.

He found Peter in a small room on the first-floor, which he called his den. The old man was seated in an easy-chair, with his feet on the fender, his eyes fixed upon the fire, and a long pipe in his mouth. He did not look a rich man at the moment; the room was the meanest in the

house; perhaps for that reason he liked it best. His pipe was of common clay; his slippers were burst at the sides, his dressing-gown out at the elbows. He generally spent his evenings in this little room alone; he had not even a cat to keep him company. Wealth he had in abundance, but he could not use it; its value was altogether fictitious. He was poorer in reality than his poorest tenant; even Watty Trelyon, with all his complainings, was happier than he.

"Well, boy, what do you want?" he asked, as soon as Edward stood before him.

"I have something very particular to say to you," was the reply. "Can you spare me the time now?"

"Ay, as well now as any other time. Say on."

"Well, there is a man in the library—Dan Spear is his name—he used to be our foreman at Goolong Creek, and he says I am not your grandson."

"Not my grandson!" said the old man, edging round his chair suddenly. "Then, by Heaven, whose grandson are you?"

"I don't know whose grandson I am, but he says Abram Fowey is my father."

"Abram who? Who do you say?"

"Abram Fowey."

"How do you spell it?"

"F O W E Y."

"Good Lord!" and the old man started to his feet. "Do you mean to tell me that A. Foy of Goolong Creek, or whatever the cursed place is called, is the same as Abram Fowey of Briar Nook?"

"He used to live at Briar Nook, I know."

"And you never told me?"

"He wished me to say nothing of the matter."

"For what reason?"

"I don't know."

Peter took two or three turns round the room, his eyes ablaze, his mouth working ominously.

"You say that two of you grew up together on the farm?" Peter questioned at length, stopping in front of Edward.

"Yes."

"And you were kept in ignorance of the fact that you were not brothers?"

"Yes."

"And you had no suspicion?"

"I had none. And I feel sure Ned had not."

"You never told me these things."

"You never asked me. You disliked me mentioning Goolong Creek."

"Why do you mention them now?"

"Because I have no right here. I am usurping the place of another. I am very sorry; but it is not my fault."

"Then you believe this Dan has spoken the truth?"

"There seems very little room for doubt."

"Why has he told you?"

"He wanted to be paid for keeping the secret."

"Then why the devil did you not give him, or promise him, hush-money? Why, man, is not the whole of Pendormie at stake?"

"Exactly: if Ned is the heir he ought to have it."

"And you give up the whole thing when you might have kept it yourself?"

"You misunderstand me," Edward answered quietly. "How could I keep it and know it was not mine?"

"I don't want any more proof," Peter said, with blazing eyes. "Thou art not a Trefusa! A Trefusa never yet played the fool when money was at stake. But, hell upon earth, what an almighty swindle! Fowey has been having his revenge with a vengeance. Good Lord! I've been out-

witted this time!" And he dropped into his chair with a groan.

Edward looked at the old man with a feeling akin to loathing. Every element of his nature seemed mean and sordid. His withered heart was never stirred by any noble impulse.

"Thou art a fool!" Peter gasped, at length, turning upon Edward a pair of blazing eyes. "I'd never told if I'd been in thy place—never! never!" And he rose suddenly to his feet again, and began to take long strides around the room. His face was a study, swept by the passions that stirred his soul. It was evident he was making a violent effort to control himself, and every moment the conviction was deepening within him that the stranger's story was true. The knowledge that A. Foy of Goolong Creek was Abram Fowey of Briar Nook made a dozen things clear. The motive was so apparent.

"I'd have done it myself," he muttered, with clenched hands. "By Heaven! I should never have thought of doing anything else." Suddenly he paused. "I'll hear the man's story first," he ejaculated. "I'll give thee fair play, Fowey as I fear thou art;" and he rushed out of the room and down the stairs.

Edward followed him, and entered the library close upon his heels.

Dan started to his feet as soon as Peter entered, and turned pale.

"You are the man from Goolong Creek?" Peter demanded fiercely. "You came here with a story—with a lie, perhaps—with a secret you want paying for. You are a scoundrel!—I can see it in your eyes. What have you to say for yourself?"

Dan was so taken aback that he shrank away from the old man as he would from a rain of blows.

"Do you hear?" shrieked Peter, foaming at the lips. "What have you to say for yourself?"

By this time Dan had somewhat recovered himself, and he answered doggedly, "I've nothing to say to you."

"Nothing to say to me!"

"No! My business is with Master Edie."

"He's told me your business with him, and now your business is with me."

"What he's told you is nothing," said Dan—"a mere tale, a suspicion. What's the worth of that?"

"You mean to say——" Peter began.

"I say nothing," was the cool reply. "Words are neither here nor there. What I said to Master Edie, or didn't say, is between ourselves."

"No, Dan," Edward interposed; "I've told him everything."

"You have, eh? Well, that's your look-out. But it don't amount to anything. You can't prove nothing."

"And can you prove anything?" Peter demanded fiercely.

"I can prove everything," was the cool reply.

"Then, prove that this is not my grandson," yelled Peter.

"I do nothing out of charity," Dan answered, with a curl of the lip.

Peter darted an angry glance at him and remained silent, while Dan raised his chin with an air of defiance. When Peter entered the room Dan felt as though the battle was lost. But, the first shock being over, he saw new possibilities opening up before him. If he could not deal with Edward, he might with Peter. The first string to his bow having snapped, he discovered a second which he had not been aware of. He might bag something yet. And he smiled complacently.

For two or three seconds there was an awkward silence. Then Peter blurted out suddenly:

“Let me know your terms.”

“Not in the presence of a third party,” Dan answered coolly, with an impudent stare at Edward.

Instantly Edward withdrew and closed the door behind him. For several minutes he paced up and down the roomy hall; then he put on his hat and went out on to the terrace. The night was dark, though the stars shone clearly; the air had a touch of frost in it. He felt that he could breathe more freely out of doors, and he raised his hat that the wind might cool his temples.

He was unable fully to realize yet all that had happened. He felt like one who had been stunned by a heavy blow. But slowly the issues were revealing themselves and setting themselves out in order. Under the power of a sudden impulse it seemed easy enough to give up everything. But he had no idea then what giving up everything meant. The whole truth was only just beginning to dawn upon him. Home, name, wealth, power, influence, leisure—all these would have to be given up. And this was but the negative side. He would have to face the world alone and single-handed; go forth an unknown man, and wring his bread from the iron grip of circumstance. Had he been trained for such a conflict it would be less hard. But he had been led to expect a life of ease; to go where his fancy led him; to enter Parliament, perhaps, if his inclinations led him that way; or, if he preferred it, to settle down merely as a country gentleman.

Then he thought of Mona. If he were the son of Abram Fowey, that little romance was for ever at an end. And he gave a sigh, which was more of relief than of regret. He would be free to win Dorothy now, and his face flushed with momentary triumph; but the feeling of exultation was soon over. An unknown man, without a penny, without the means of earning a respectable living—what right had he to

think of winning the love of any woman, particularly such a woman as Dorothy Grey?

From across the valley came the harsh strains of a merry-go-round, with an occasional clang of a gong outside some peep-show, and now and then a burst of laughter or a snatch of song. The St. Aubynites were making a full day of it. "Coming of age" celebrations were of rare occurrence, and the unmarried portion of the community, at any rate, was bent on having a good time.

Edward lifted his head for a moment. Then his brow darkened.

"And this is life," he muttered. "Good heavens! what a medley! Merrymaking outside, intrigue within. One day hope, the next despair. Loving to-day, hating to-morrow. And jostle and fret and struggle going on all the while. I wonder who gets the best of it? How does the Hall compare with the cottage? Are the rich better off than the poor? Upon my soul, I believe those simple village-folk are to be envied. I know they envy me, but how little they know! To-morrow, perhaps, they will pity me when they hear the news. Well, well, I'm more deserving of pity than anything else. My life seems a mistake. I'm in the way. Everything happens at the wrong time. What bit of my life has not been spoiled by other people I have succeeded in spoiling myself. And now I'm all adrift."

And, jamming his hat more tightly on his head, he stole down the terrace-steps and struck across the lawn. He did not concern himself in the least respecting the interview between the man he had called his grandfather and Dan Spear. The result was a foregone conclusion. Granted that the motive was there, and the evidence was overwhelming. He understood now Abram's tenderness toward him, his anguish at parting.

"Poor man!" he muttered to himself—he could not bring himself yet to say "father." "He was sorely tried. He had been robbed, and felt bitter. But if he had done the right it would have been a thousand times better. I wonder what Ned will say when he hears? But I must go away and learn somewhere to earn my own bread."

Then he paused and looked around him. There were only a few stars visible now, for clouds had come up from the west.

"Go away," he repeated. "Go out into the dark alone. My life has not as many stars in it as this night has, and I have no compass to guide me."

Dan had disappeared before he returned to the house, and Peter had betaken himself to his own room. Edward made an effort to see him, but the old man would not be disturbed.

"Go to bed," he called. "You ought to have been there an hour ago. I'll see you in the morning."

Without a word Edward turned away and crossed the landing to his own room—alas! his own no longer. He was there on sufferance now.

The next moment he was arrested by the violent ringing of the door-bell.

"I wonder who can be here at this time of night?" he said to himself. And he went and leaned over the balustrade.

"So ho!" he muttered. "It's Mr. Carve, is it? He's been in bad odour before. I wonder what the upshot of this will be?" and he turned back into his own room and closed the door.

What passed between the lawyer and Peter never clearly transpired. That high words passed between them there was no doubt whatever. Indeed, both admitted the fact on the following day.

Mr. Whittle, the senior partner, though very feeble, came up to the Hall and tried to smooth matters over with the squire; pointed out that Mr. Carve was compelled to act upon the evidence he had; that at the time he went to Australia he had no reason for suspecting the existence of fraud; that any other lawyer would have acted in precisely the same way, and that even now it was unwise to jump to a hasty conclusion.

But Peter was not to be mollified.

"I tell thee what, Whittle," he snarled. "I've no faith in lawyers. They're all open to a bribe, and will rob their own mothers for a consideration."

Mr. Whittle grew red to the top of his bald head.

"You needn't be insulting," he said, after a painful interval of silence.

"The cap fits too well, eh?" and Peter laughed maliciously.

"The man who takes a bribe is no worse than he who offers it," said Mr. Whittle quietly. "And it ill becomes you to fling stones at me. You may live to regret it if you are not careful."

"What's that? What's that?" hissed Peter, rising quickly to his feet. "By Heaven! you'd better not threaten me."

"Then, don't insult other people," said the lawyer.

"I've no wish to insult you," Peter answered; "but I'm mad, miserable, humiliated, made the laughing-stock of fools and the sport of my enemies! Put yourself in my place."

"If I were in your place I should keep quiet on the matter."

"Thunder and lightning! how is it possible to keep quiet? The boy is as absolutely convinced as I am. Am I to keep an impostor under my roof—treat him as my heir, and let

him marry my grand-daughter? Heaven and earth! what next?"

"You should prove first that he is an impostor."

Peter gave a snort of contempt.

"You need not sneer in that way," said Mr. Whittle. "How do you know that you are not being imposed upon now?"

"Great Scott! I don't know," said Peter, after a moment of silence. "I don't know anything. I'm hemmed in on all sides by rogues and liars. I pay men to watch my interests; but who shall watch the watchers? I bribe you to cheat Fowey. Fowey bribes Carve to cheat me, and where the thing ends Heaven alone knows."

"You have no reason to assume that Abram Fowey bribed Mr. Carve," said Mr. Whittle sharply.

"I've reason to assume the worst of everything," Peter snarled. "Good heavens! and have I sinned and schemed all these years for this?"

"It was a bad day for both of us when we set covetous eyes upon what was not our own," said Mr. Whittle solemnly.

"A lawyer preaching," Peter answered, with a sneer. "But go away, and leave me in peace. Instead of straightening things, you make confusion worse confounded."

Mr. Whittle rose to his feet at once.

"I am sorry you will not listen to reason," he said, as a parting shot. "It's bad logic to assume that because you would do a certain thing under a given set of circumstances, other people would necessarily do the same. If trouble comes of it, don't blame me." And before Peter could reply, he had closed the door behind him.

Peter sank heavily into his chair and groaned. He knew in his heart of hearts he was reaping what he had sown, and there was no comfort for him anywhere. He had sown

dragon's teeth, and the harvest was ripening rapidly. It seemed to him as if all the world were against him—as if everybody had entered into a conspiracy to defraud him. There was no one he could trust, no one whose word he could believe. He felt that he was in a world of rogues and liars, and he felt it simply because he knew he had not been honest and truthful himself. It is ever so. The world we see is but the reflection of ourselves. We project our own image into every picture of human life.

CHAPTER XVII.

TO SAY "GOOD-BYE."

"Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint, cold fear thrills through my veins,
That almost freezes up the heat of life."

SHAKESPEARE.

DIRECTLY after breakfast Edward started out across the park to call on Mona. He walked very slowly, and noticed everything as he went. He was beginning to feel a very tender affection for Pendormic and all its surroundings. Ah! we never properly value things until we are on the point of losing them, or they are absolutely lost. He even felt a tiny glow of affection for Peter when he came into his bedroom that morning. He thought there was a kinder light in the old man's eyes than he had ever seen before—a more pathetic tone in his voice.

"Excuse me disturbing you," was Peter's greeting; "but this is a bad business for us all."

"I presume you have got hold of the facts of the case," Edward said, sitting up in bed.

"Ay, the thing is straightforward enough. All the papers are properly attested."

"I'm sorry it has happened," Edward answered quietly. "He shouldn't have done it. The temptation was great, no doubt, but, as the rector said last Sunday, 'Wrong-doing always ends badly.'"

"Oh, that's all fudge," Peter answered impatiently. "Parsons are paid for saying them things. Wrong-doing only ends badly when it's found out, and fortunately or unfortunately—I'm blowed if I know which—this has been found out. So much the worse for you."

"I'm not sure of that," was the reply. "I've been living but a poor kind of life lately. I may be all the better for having to face the world alone."

"A poor kind of life, eh? Well, all I can say is I pity your taste. If you were a Trefusa, you would not talk in that way."

"Perhaps not; and since I'm a Fowey——"

"Don't be sure of anything, boy, for nothing is certain. I'm loath to believe thou art the grandson of that canting old Methody, John Fowey."

"If report speaks truly, he was a very good man," Edward answered warmly.

"He was a psalm-singing hypocrite."

"At any rate, he was honest."

"Oh! defending thy ancestors, eh?"

"I've a perfect right to."

"Humph, yes; thou'lt be whitewashing Abram next."

"No, I shall not attempt that, though he had strong provocation. But meeting fraud with fraud does not make an honest action."

"What's that? What's that?" Peter said with a sudden blaze in his eyes.

"I mean no offence to you," Edward answered. "I do not understand all the bearings of the case, but one thing seems certain enough: that whether John Fowey be my grandfather or not, he paid for Briar Nook."

"I know nothing about that," said Peter sharply; "but if he did, Sir Harry Probus got the money; I didn't. I paid dearly enough for the whole place, Briar Nook included."

"Well, I don't want to argue the matter," Edward said with an absent look in his eyes. "I'm very sorry it has all happened. It's very humiliating to me. I'll go away as soon as possible. I ought not to stay a single hour."

Peter looked at him for a moment or two with a strangely pathetic light in his eyes, then turned suddenly round and hobbled out of the room. He did not come down to breakfast, and after Edward had swallowed a cup of coffee and some dry toast, he started off, as we have seen, to call upon Mona.

The latter saw him coming across the park and ran out to meet him.

"You are an early bird this morning," she said in her bright, cheery way; then, noticing the troubled look on his face, she added, "Are you not well, Ted, or has something happened?"

"Something has happened, Mona," he answered with averted eyes—"something that has changed everything."

"Has—has—grandfather——" she began.

"No, no, he is very well, except that he is naturally upset. The truth is, a terrible-mistake has been made, or a fraud committed. It does not much matter what name you give it."

"A mistake? A fraud? Who's been stealing?" she asked quickly.

He smiled pathetically for a moment, then answered:

"You will never guess, Mona; so I'd better out with it first as last. The truth is, I'm not Edward Trefusa at all."

She stopped suddenly, and all the colour went out of her face in a moment.

"Not Edward Trefusa at all," she said slowly, as though doubtful if she had heard correctly.

"So it appears," he answered with a touch of bitterness in his voice.

"Then, who are you?" she asked eagerly.

"Heaven knows! Nothing seems clear, except that I'm an impostor; but the probabilities are I am the son of Abram Fowey."

"No, no; how can that be?"

"Come across here to this garden-seat, and I will tell you everything;" and he led the way with rapid steps, she as quickly following.

For several minutes after he had finished his story silence lay between them. Mona felt as though she had no power of utterance left. It seemed to her as though the world had turned topsy-turvy; nothing was any longer as it had been; everything was shifted out of its place. She was not a rapid thinker; her intellect was not of that order. She could not grasp all the points of a case in a moment; she needed time to get anything like order out of the present chaos.

High in the tall trees the blackbirds were whistling gleefully; now and then a faded leaf fluttered downward through the still air and lay at their feet. The distant landscape was steeped in the pale autumnal sunshine, and lost itself in a dreamy haze.

Mona's eyes travelled away across the park to the farthest range of hills, faintly outlined against the pale gray sky, and for the first time a sense of mystery stole into her heart. Life was shadowed like the hills, and what lay beyond the shadows none could tell.

She turned her eyes towards her companion at length, and said faintly, "Will you try to prove that the papers are all forgeries?"

"They are not forgeries," he answered, speaking slowly. "Resistance is of no use, even if I cared to resist. No, I shall submit to the inevitable as gracefully as I can, and go away quietly."

"Go away, Ted?" she questioned, turning appealing eyes toward him.

"There is nothing else for me to do," he answered. "I cannot stay here, if I would."

"But surely you will not give up everything without a struggle?"

"It isn't a case for the law-courts," he answered. "At least, I think not. If it were, I shouldn't be disposed to fight it."

"Why not?"

"I should gain nothing. The evidence is overwhelming. Motive can be shown as clear as daylight. I am convinced myself. I am sure your grandfather is."

"But what of me, Ted?" she questioned, a soft glow suffusing her cheeks.

For a moment or two he looked at her without replying. He never loved her more than at that moment—not with a love that wanted possession, not with a passion like that which he felt for Dorothy, and yet with a love as strong as it was pure, as lasting as the reverence on which it was built.

"You would not marry an impostor and a pauper," he said at length.

"Please do not call yourself names," she said with a pathetic smile. "You are not to blame for what has happened."

"Perhaps not, Mona—perhaps not; but since the truth has come out, I cannot hold you to your promise."

"I do not think the less of you, Ted, because you are not a Trefusa," she answered with swimming eyes.

"It is kind of you to say so," he said tenderly; "but all the same, you would not care to marry me."

"I have never been anxious to be married at all," she said, turning away her face. "I knew grandfather wished it, and I have always liked you, and always shall. But I question if either of us knows anything about love."

"Have you only just found that out?" he asked quickly.

"I really don't know," she answered, looking off across the park. "I don't think I have ever thought much about it."

"Then, you will not be sorry that there can be no wedding?" he questioned.

"I don't know, really, Ted. I know I want to keep you always. Oh! don't think I am not fond of you; I really do love you—not like the books put it, exactly, but, oh! you are just like a big, dear brother to me, and I cannot bear to think of you going away."

"And you won't despise me because I am simply Edward Fowey, the son of a poor man?"

"Despise you, Ted?" and she took his face between her hands and kissed him.

The tears came into the big fellow's eyes in a moment.

"God bless you, Mona!" he said huskily; "I shall always reverence women, since I have known you."

Then Mona rested her sunny head against his shoulder and began to cry.

"Oh dear!" she sobbed, "that bad, wicked man, with his hateful little eyes, has spoiled everything, and I don't believe a word he has said."

"Don't say that, Mona," he answered.

"I can't help it," she said resolutely, trying to recover herself. "I don't believe that man could tell the truth if he were to try."

"Oh yes; he is not so bad as that. I was very fond of him when I was a boy."

"Oh, boys will get fond of snakes," she answered. "There's no accounting for them. And that man's a snake; I'm sure he is."

"I don't think he is quite," he answered quietly.

"Besides, his word is in reality no part of the evidence."

Then Mona began to cry again.

"Don't fret," he said, after a long pause. "Life must have trouble of some kind. It wouldn't be life if we hadn't something to try us. Perhaps we shall meet again some day, when we shall both be happier."

"Meet again? You surely are not going now—straight away?"

"Yes; I shall go as soon as I can get my things together."

"But where will you go?"

"I don't know. I only know I can't stay here. Your grandfather hates the very name of Fowey. I shall breathe more freely, and perhaps think more clearly, when I get away from all the associations of this place."

"Oh, what an awful—awful——"

"Fiasco?" he suggested.

"Isn't it a dream, think you? I can't take it all in yet. Come into the house and tell mother about it."

"I will go in and say good-bye to her," he answered. "You must tell her all the rest."

Mrs. Tom, however, was not in evidence. She had one of her bad headaches, and sent word that she could not see anybody.

Mona, from the open door, watched Edward as he made his way back across the park—watched him with trembling lips and eyes half blinded with tears. She thought he never looked so handsome as he did that day—had never appeared in her eyes so brave, and strong, and good.

Edward did not look back. He felt thankful that the parting was over. When he turned the brow of the hill he paused and looked around him. It was a beautiful picture on which his eyes rested—hill and dale, wood and stream, and in a gap between the hills a glimmer of the shining sea.

"Perhaps I shall never see it again," he said, with a swift glance around him. "Farewell, then—farewell."

And for the rest of the day he kept indoors, busily engaged in packing his things.

Peter resolutely kept out of his sight. He could not understand why the old man so persistently left him alone. The great house was painfully silent; all the servants appeared to be on the *qui vive*. They knew that something had happened, or that something was going to happen. Mr. Carve would not have been sent for late at night unless something was astir, nor would Mr. Whittle have come first thing in the morning unless that something was of importance. It was clear, too, that something was troubling the young master. After his return from the cottage he went at once to his own room, and had scarcely shown his face since, while the squire had locked himself up in his den, refusing to see anyone.

The butler declared that, if it had been June instead of October, he should have been certain a thunderstorm was brewing. The silence was most oppressive. All the servants persisted in talking in whispers, and everyone was on the alert to get some explanation of the mystery. Toward evening Job was informed that his young master was going away by the night mail, and that his portmanteau would have to be taken to Penzugla Road Station.

This set every tongue in the establishment wagging with redoubled energy. Master Edward was not in the habit of taking long railway journeys. Moreover, why was not the matter mentioned till the last minute? Clearly they were on the eve of important events, and a hundred guesses were hazarded as to what the next few hours might reveal.

It was getting dusk when Edward stood at the door of Peter's den, asking to be admitted. He had got everything in readiness for his departure, and was anxious to have a few last words with the old man before the final farewell.

It is doubtful, however, whether Peter fully understood

the purport of his visit. At any rate, he declined to open the door.

"Don't disturb me!" he called from within, in a fretful voice. "I'm busy just now, and can't see anyone."

"But I want to see you particularly," Edward answered.

"Oh, go away, and don't bother!" was the peevish reply.

"I am going away——"

"That's right," he interposed quickly; "go away at once."

"And you will not see me bef——"

"Have I not told you to go away? Oh dear!"

"All right; I will not trouble you again." And he turned away with trembling lip and a terribly white face.

Ten minutes later the door had closed behind him, and he stood in the deepening twilight with a strange, numb feeling at his heart. He had decided to walk to the station, and to go round by way of St. Aubyn.

At the lodge gates he stood for a moment or two and looked back. In reality he could see very little, for it had grown almost dark. But in imagination he could see everything. The memory of the nine years he had lived in England swept over him like a flood. It seemed only as yesterday since, as a lad of twelve, fresh from a far-off country, with a heart pining for the faces of those he loved, he had passed through these same gates, the recognised heir of the Pendormic estates. Now he was slinking away as an impostor should, with no friendly hand reached out to him, with no voice of love to bid him God-speed.

For a moment his lips trembled, and a mist came over his eyes. His former farewell had been painful enough, but this was far more bitter. For one thing, he was capable of feeling more deeply, and for another thing, this farewell carried along with it no compensation.

When he left Australia the future glowed with splendid

possibilities, and he forgot his grief in some measure in anticipation of the good things in store. Now his future was a black, starless night. He was going out like a patriarch of ancient times, "not knowing whither he went." As yet he had formed no plans, and had only one purpose, and that was to go away, and the farther away the better. He had completed the second act in the little drama of his life. The curtain had dropped. What the next scene was he did not know. He stood again at the parting of the ways, and God alone knew what the future would bring.

BOOK III.

STRUGGLE.

“I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.”



CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE STARS.

“The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails.”

Winter's Tale.

EDWARD'S purpose in going round by St. Aubyn was governed by a single desire. He wanted a last look at Dorothy. There was just a possibility he might meet her in the street, or that he might see her in some shop, or that he might catch a glimpse of her through one of the windows of Green Bank. He knew that the St. Aubyn people did not always draw their blinds when the lamps were lighted. They were a simple, unsuspecting folk, and had very few secrets their neighbours did not share. It would be a rude thing, of course, to stare through a person's window, but the circumstances were not ordinary, and a glance of farewell might be forgiven.

He left the highroad almost as soon as he got into it, and

struck out across the fields. It would lengthen his walk a little, but he would meet fewer people. For the length of two fields he hurried along at a swinging pace, then halted where the ways met, one path leading to Penmewan, the other to St. Aubyn.

He would not have halted at all, but for the sound of a footstep, and the next moment Dorothy stood before him. He recognised her in an instant, though he had only the light of the stars. But her eyes were as suns to him.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Grey," he said. "Allow me to help you over the stile."

"You are surprised at meeting me here and alone," she questioned, not noticing his offer of help.

"I am a little," he answered.

"I have been spending a few hours with Kitty Treleven," was the reply; "her mother died early this afternoon."

"She is dead, is she?"

"She passed peacefully away in her sleep. It is a blessed release for all, though Kitty naturally feels it very much."

"And the old man?"

"He is much shaken. I do not think he will long survive her."

"Poor Kitty, what will she do then?"

"I do not know. The world is always hard on single women, and Kitty was never intended by nature to battle with the world alone."

"Yet she has chosen her life, they tell me?"

"In some respects, yes. In others it has been chosen for her. But I must say good-evening, Mr. Trefusa. My aunt will be expecting me."

"May I not accompany you?" he asked. "I am going to St. Aubyn."

"I beg your pardon. I thought you were going in the other direction."

"The truth is, I am going away. Perhaps we shall never meet again after to-night."

She started and staggered as though he had struck her, and all the colour went out of her face in a moment. Fortunately for her, the friendly darkness hid her confusion, and he did not see the look of mute appeal that came into her eyes.

For several moments there was a painful and an embarrassing silence. Dorothy had no power of speech, while he felt hurt that she had received his announcement with such seeming indifference.

"I hoped that I might see you this evening," he said at length in a constrained tone, "just to say good-bye. You avoided us yesterday."

"I was unable to come," she answered with downcast eyes. Then suddenly looking up, she added, "Let me congratulate you to-day!"

"No, don't please—don't. So much has happened since; and I am going away."

"So you have said before. I do not quite understand." And in her desperate effort to control herself, her voice took on a tone that was cold and unsympathetic.

"Of course it cannot matter to you," he said a little bitterly. "Why should it? No one will care."

Her heart gave a great thump, and then seemed to stop. Her position was desperately cruel. The sound of his voice was like the opening of the floodgates of her soul. All the pent-up love that she had been beating back for weeks and weeks swept over her like a tidal wave, and yet she was compelled to appear cold and indifferent. She felt that she had no right to be talking to this man at all. And yet his presence was like the opening of the gates of Paradise; his voice was music; the touch of his hand set all her nerves thrilling.

It was a humiliating position, and she tried to be angry with herself. She fancied that she had conquered her foolish passion, that she had succeeded in enshrining another image in her heart. She had been thinking of Walter Smith in her quiet walk from Penmewan Farm—had been picturing their life together; and now in a moment the gossamer of her dreams was torn into shreds. The idol she had been rearing and trying to endow with every possible virtue suddenly crumbled into dust. Her heart, after all, was stronger than her will, and her love would not be compelled.

She was half angry with Edward Trefusa that he possessed this power over her and over her dreams. Her reason and judgment protested against his dominance. She had weighed all the pros and cons carefully, and had come to the conclusion that it was her duty to love Walter Smith and to marry him. Why, then, did her foolish heart yearn after this man, who was as much beyond her reach as the stars that twinkled in the far-off heavens?

"I am at a loss to understand what you mean by going away and no one caring. Are you going a journey round the world?"

She spoke quite calmly. At any rate, there was no trace of emotion in her voice.

"I do not know where I am going," he answered slowly; "my life here is ended. I shall never come back."

They had reached another stile by this time, and Dorothy grasped one of the wooden posts and leaned heavily against it. He rested his shoulder against the other post, and looked at her earnestly. She felt that his eyes were upon her, though she could not see them. She had a difficult part to play, but she resolved to be equal to it.

"Have you quarrelled with the squire?" she asked indifferently.

"No; I have quarrelled with no one. But a secret has

been unearthed that will be known to everybody in a few days, so I need not hesitate to tell it to you."

"Please don't!" she answered quickly; "I can't bear secrets. They fidget me."

"If you don't want to hear," he said coldly, "I will, of course, be silent. It was foolish of me to suppose that my affairs could be of any interest to you."

"Now, you mistake me!" she said impulsively. "I only said that secrets fidgeted me."

"I thought a few weeks ago that we regarded each other as friends," he said after a pause. "Have I said anything, or done anything, to offend you?"

"You have not offended me at all," she answered.

"Then, why have you avoided me?" he asked, leaning towards her as he spoke.

"Have I avoided you?" she questioned evasively. "You honour me too much. If the small accidents of life have not thrown us into each other's way, it is neither here nor there."

For a moment he bit his lips. Then he answered quietly:

"I have no right to press the question. I see you do not want to answer me."

"Surely such a question needs no answer," she replied with spirit. "Your own judgment must convince you that we cannot possibly be anything more than mere acquaintances."

"Why not?"

"Why not? Because, in the first place, I am a woman and you are a man. Because, in the next place, our paths in life lie wide apart. Our social positions are widely different; our interests at no point are identical. Moreover, in this evil world, no one is safe from gossiping tongues."

"Ah!" he said quickly, "I have never thought of that."

"You and Miss Mona have been very kind to me,"

Dorothy went on. "I am sure you have been grateful for the little service I rendered. And both my aunt and myself have been touched by your attention, and by your evident desire to be friendly. But, in spite of all this, you know as well as I do that our paths must for ever lie far apart. Now let me say good-night, and go home alone."

"Please grant me another moment!" he said; "it is quite early yet; besides, I shall never trouble you again. I am going away by the last train to-night, and shall never return."

"I cannot imagine what you mean," she answered, with a troubled look in her eyes, which, however, was lost upon him.

"I have been aching to tell you," he answered, "only you have seemed so indifferent. But the truth is, I am not a Trefusa at all. I am somebody else's son—a nobody—imposed upon the squire. The truth only came out last night. You will hear all the particulars in a few days. But I shall be far enough away—and the farther away the better."

Dorothy's great eyes had been growing wider and wider, and when he had finished she said with a gasp:

"Surely you are dreaming, Mr. Trefusa!"

"Don't call me 'Mr. Trefusa' again," he said. "I have no right to the name. For the last nine years I have been an impostor. Unconsciously, it is true. Now I must pay the penalty. I am slinking away to-night in the darkness, nameless, homeless, friendless!"

"No—not friendless, surely?"

"Never was a man more so," he said bitterly. "I haven't a friend in the world."

"Will not the squire help you?" she asked.

"He would not even say good-bye to me. Think how humiliated and chagrined he must feel, particularly coming after yesterday's celebrations."

"And Mona?" Dorothy questioned.

"Ah, bless her!" Edward answered. "She is the sweetest creature alive. Yes, I must withdraw what I said. Mona is my friend still. She is genuinely sorry for me, though I think she is devoutly thankful to escape marrying me."

"Surely you are unjust to her?"

"No; I am not. The truth is, we neither of us knew our hearts. We knew that the squire wanted us to marry each other, and we knew that we were very fond of each other. And then there came the announcement of our engagement in the papers before we were engaged, and so we were, in a measure, driven into it. We both of us recognised soon after that we had made a mistake."

"And did you tell each other so?"

"How could we? Neither of us knew what the other was thinking. Had not the secret come out that I was an impostor, we should have felt in honour bound to each other to the end of the chapter. But when I told Mona this morning who I was, or, rather, who I was not, the truth, you see, was bound to leak out."

"And you are both glad to be free?"

"Yes; that is the truth," he said slowly. "It is of no use trying to disguise it. If Mona were my sister I could not love her more—perhaps not so much; and at one time I thought that the love I bore to her was the only kind of love that could touch the heart of man. But I have learned differently since."

Dorothy's heart began to beat uncomfortably fast again, and she made another effort to get away.

"I am very sorry for you," she said, reaching out her hand to him. "Let me say good-bye to you now; and, believe me, I wish you every blessing."

He took her hand in his and held it firmly.

"Good-bye," he said. "Good-bye, Dorothy. Let me call you by that name this once. Seeing you has taught me what love means. Pardon my presumption. I fought against it with all my might; but my heart was too strong for me. I love you as passionately and as purely as a man ever loved a woman; but I ask for no return. How can I ask, when I am nameless, homeless, helpless, friendless?"

He felt her hand tremble in his. She tried to draw it away, but she had no strength. She knew she had no right to listen to such a confession, and yet it was sweeter than music in her ears. Walter Smith had been at Green Bank the night before, and had left with some kind of understanding—she hardly knew what it was. He had proposed to her definitely enough, and if she had not said "Yes" she certainly had not said "No." She had felt perplexed, bewildered, not knowing what to do for the best. He was manly and clever and good, and she admired him immensely. Policy kept urging her to say "Yes." Her aunt would be pleased, her future assured, her path removed from contact with Edward Trefusa, and yet, and yet——

She could not remember now what she said, or if she had said anything. Had she by her silence given consent? Was she in any way bound to him? And if she was, she ought not to remain a moment longer in this man's company. And yet to be with him was like being in heaven. It was nothing to her that he was nameless, and friendless, and poor. It was not because he was Trefusa's heir that her heart had gone out to him. It was the man she loved, not his money; and now that fortune had turned against him she loved him more than ever. She longed to help him in his struggle with the world—to comfort him in his trouble, to be a friend to him in his friendlessness.

And so she remained, her hand held firmly in his, her conscience protesting terribly, her breast in a tumult of emotion.

He had drawn more closely to her as he spoke. The little hand that trembled in his spoke volumes to him. Her coldness to him during the past few weeks was not indifference, after all. Perhaps—dared he think so?—she found herself liking him, and so kept out of his way as a measure of precaution.

“You are not offended with me because I called you Dorothy?” he asked, his voice trembling with suppressed emotion.

“No. Why should I be?” The words came almost in a whisper.

“God bless you!” he answered fervently. “And you do not think the worse of me because I am poor and nameless?”

“Oh no! how can you ask me? But let me go, please. I ought not to be here with you; I ought not to listen to you. But hark! was not that a footstep?”

“It is only the wind,” he answered, with a smile. “But I will let you go now. You will soon forget me, forget that I loved you, forget that I told you of my hopeless passion.”

“No, no! I shall never forget you,” she answered, the tears coming with a rush to her eyes. “But it is better we should part at once and say no more.”

“Perhaps you are right,” he said slowly. “Perhaps it is better my dream should end here. But, oh, Dorothy, you will never know how I have loved, and how I have suffered. May you never be doomed to a hopeless passion such as that which consumes me!”

“Oh, please do not speak to me in that way!” she wailed. “You do not know what you are saying.”

“Not know!” he said passionately; “I know but too surely. The truth has burnt its way into my very soul.





Then he took her hand in his . . . and raised it to his lips.

Since that hour I carried you to the inn at the Porth, I have known no peace. I was bound to Mona, and loved you. God forgive me if I have done wrong. But I have watched for you, waited for you, lived upon your smile—when you have deigned to bestow it—and treasured your words as my richest possession. Perhaps I'm a coward for telling you all this now; but how can I help it, Dorothy? Love such as mine will not be silenced. Besides, this is my last chance. I am going away to-night, and it eases my heart to let you know."

For a moment or two there was silence. Then Dorothy lifted her eyes to his, and said brokenly:

"May God pity us both!"

"What!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Is it possible that you care for me?"

"Don't ask me," she said. "Let us try to forget that we ever met."

His arm was around her in a moment.

"Dorothy," he said passionately, "if you care for me, nothing shall part us. I will work, strive, win——"

"No, no!" she answered; "it is too late."

He drew away from her suddenly.

"You are not free?" he questioned, and there was a tone of unutterable despair in his voice.

She bowed her head and was silent.

"May God indeed pity us!" he said after a long pause.

Then he took her hand in his—it was still trembling, and cold as a stone—and raised it to his lips. He was too chivalrous to press his suit if another stood in the way.

"Farewell, Dorothy," he said tenderly. "And may God be with you!"

"Farewell, Edward," she answered, with a sob.

So they parted, he making his way rapidly toward the station, and she loitering slowly toward home.

CHAPTER II.

OFFENDED DIGNITY.

“No man had ever a point of pride
But was injurious to him.”

BURKE.

WALTER SMITH had received so much encouragement from Miss Jane, and so little discouragement from Dorothy, that he considered his love affairs as good as settled. In truth, he had never been much troubled with doubt as to what the final issue would be. Though not exactly egotistical, he nevertheless stood well with himself; besides which he had received so much flattery from all the marriageable maidens in the circuit, that it was only natural that he should imagine it was simply a question of “ask and receive.” It was true Dorothy had been an exception to the general rule. She had never thrown herself in his way—never appeared to care greatly for his company. For these reasons, perhaps, he loved her all the more. Still, he could not bring himself to believe that, when it came to a definite offer of marriage, she would refuse him. And since Miss Jane was altogether on his side, he felt doubly confident.

It was somewhat disappointing to him, he had to admit, that she wanted so much time to consider the matter. He had pressed hard for a definite answer on the previous afternoon, while Miss Jane and most other people of note

were enjoying the celebrations at the Hall. He had been greatly relieved to find that she had not accepted the squire's invitation—had been delighted with the pleasant and friendly manner in which she had received him. On the other hand, he had been somewhat chagrined that she was so busy with household duties (in the absence of her aunt) that she could give him very little of her time, and more than disappointed that a preaching appointment at a village four miles away necessarily cut short his visit.

He did not tell her when he left that he would return again the next evening, though she might have known he would do so, since Miss Jane had given him a generous invitation to make Green Bank his home when on that side of the circuit.

When he came to think the matter over quietly, he was, on the whole, fairly well satisfied with what had taken place. Dorothy had not said "No," and that in love affairs might be regarded as almost equal to a "Yes." During the next day his spirits sensibly rose. He would see Dorothy again in the evening, and he had little doubt that the day after their engagement might be publicly announced.

Dorothy, it must be said, was haunted by a similar feeling. She felt that she had gone too far to retreat. If she meant "No," she might have discouraged the young minister weeks and months ago, instead of which she had encouraged him. She had felt as though her only safety lay in that direction. Besides, she liked him better than anybody else, save one, and he was out of her reach; and so, while she had dallied and hesitated, she had steadily drifted into a position from which she could not extricate herself, even if she desired to do so.

It was not an uncommon position by any means. Women cannot always marry the men they love the best.

Walter Smith hurried back to Green Bank after his

service with all possible haste. He was impatient to see Dorothy again—impatient for her definite “Yes.”

Miss Jane received him very graciously. She knew he had been to see Dorothy the previous day during her absence, and in her heart she was glad that his suit appeared to be prospering so well. Dorothy was something of a trial to her, and the prospect of having her safe off her hands so soon was very gratifying.

“I expect Dorothy in every minute,” she said, as soon as Mr. Smith had comfortably seated himself.

“Is she not at home?” he asked quickly.

“She has gone over to Penmewan Farm to spend a few hours with Kitty Trelevan,” Miss Jane answered slowly. “Poor Mrs. Trelevan died early this afternoon. But Dorothy ought to have been at home before this. I don’t like her crossing those fields alone in the dark, though she really does not know what fear is.”

“I will go and meet her,” Mr. Smith said, starting at once to his feet. “She will be sure to come home across the fields?”

“I think so. Oh yes; she will not come all the way round by the road.”

Miss Jane accompanied him into the hall, and opened the door for him.

“I shall enjoy the walk,” he said, as he ran down the garden-path. “It is a lovely night.”

Miss Jane returned to the drawing-room, and waited.

“I’m glad it’s so nearly settled,” she said to herself, as she smiled complacently at the fire. “Dorothy is a splendid girl; but she is a great charge, and, really, I’m not strong enough to keep her in order. It needs a man to do that. I don’t think she’s just the sort for a minister’s wife, but Walter Smith is not of the finicking kind, and he’ll hold her in check.

"Yes, yes," she went on, after a lengthy pause; "it will be a good thing to have her off my hands. There's been no repose in Green Bank since she came. She's like a constant breeze blowing through the place. I suppose she can't help it. She's young, and strong, and full of spirits. But it's trying to one at my time of life. Well, well, it's a satisfactory conclusion. Walter Smith is a good man;" and she smiled at the fire again.

A few minutes later there was a violent ring at the front-door bell, followed by the entrance of Mr. Smith, in a state of great excitement. Without any preliminary knock, he rushed into the dining-room, carrying his hat in his hand.

"You will excuse me, Miss Pendray," he said, almost breathlessly, "but I am leaving at once. I have asked Ann to fetch down my bag. I cannot stay here to-night. I must be off at once."

"Indeed," said Miss Jane, rising to her feet with a look of wonder in her eyes. "What is the meaning of this sudden change? I thought you intended going to meet Dorothy."

"I did go to meet her," he said bitterly, "and I have returned."

"But why have you returned without her?" Miss Jane asked sharply.

"Why? Yes, you may well ask why! Perhaps she will tell you herself when she returns."

"Please don't speak in riddles," said Miss Jane, in a tone of alarm. "Dorothy is my niece. Tell me what has happened."

"I would rather not, Miss Pendray. Suffice it that my dream is at an end. I had hoped to make your niece my wife. But my eyes have been opened this evening. I need not say any more. Good-night."

Miss Jane darted swiftly across the room, and set her back against the door.

"No, Mr. Smith," she said, with flashing eyes; "you are not going without some further explanation. I have a right to know what has happened, and I insist upon knowing."

Mr. Smith raised his eyes to her face for a moment, then fidgeted with his hat, which he still held in his hand. He was very pale, and his lips twitched nervously.

"I do not question your right," he said, after a brief pause. "But I would much rather you learned the truth from your niece herself."

"Good gracious!" Miss Jane exclaimed. "Is a lover's quarrel a matter of so much mystery, and are two people going to play the fool to the end of the chapter?"

"It is not a lovers' quarrel, Miss Pendray," Walter Smith answered, with great dignity. "I have not spoken to your niece this evening."

"Then, what in the name of common-sense have you done?" Miss Jane demanded, losing nearly all control of herself. "Why don't you speak out like a man? What is the use of beating about the bush in this way?"

"Really, Miss Pendray——" he began.

"No, don't 'really' me!" she interrupted. "Tell me where Dorothy is, and why this sudden change of front. The Pendrays, I would like you to know, are not to be trifled with."

"Nor are the Smiths!" he interjected angrily.

"No?" she questioned, a curious smile playing round the corners of her mouth. "But, pardon me, that is neither here nor there. I want to know what has happened. Where is Dorothy? What is the meaning of all this hurry and mystery?"

"I am sorry you insist upon knowing," he said, in a

much lower tone of voice. "I am in great distress, and would prefer to remain silent. I went to meet Miss Grey, as you know. I got as far as Varco's stile——"

"Yes?" Miss Jane questioned, seeing he hesitated.

"I did not get over it," he went on. "I heard voices which I thought I recognised. I made a little *détour*, and came quite near."

"Well?"

"Well, I discovered that I was not mistaken."

"Dorothy was there?"

"Yes; and the young squire."

"The young squire!" she gasped. "Are you certain?"

"Quite certain. He had his arm round her waist, and was making love to her."

Miss Jane glided to the next chair, and sank down into it without a word.

"I am very sorry for you," Mr. Smith said pityingly. "I am sorry for myself—sorry for all concerned. Had I not seen with my own eyes, and heard with my own ears, I would not have believed. It is a terrible blow to me. This has not been their first meeting. Good-night."

Miss Jane did not reply. She sat quite still staring into the fire. A thousand terrible possibilities confronted her in a moment. As was natural, perhaps, she saw only the worst aspects of the case. She heard the door close behind Mr. Smith, but she did not stir. She could think only of Dorothy, out alone in the dark with the young squire, and her brow darkened and her hands clenched involuntarily.

Meanwhile, Dorothy was making her way homeward slowly and with many pauses. She was so agitated that she dreaded meeting her aunt. Never before had her heart been torn by such a conflict of emotions; never had joy and pain been so strangely mixed. To know that Edward

Trefusa—or whatever his name might be—loved her was heaven. Alas! everything else spelt hell. Knowledge had come too late; they had met only to part; the Fates had been against them all along the line; what had seemed prudence had turned out to be foolishness. Their eyes had been opened sufficiently to see what might have been, and from henceforth those few words would be the burden of their sighs and their songs.

Dorothy paused every few minutes and faced the wind. She felt that her cheeks were still aflame; her heart was beating at fever-speed. Her only consolation was that, from a society point of view, she had acted with a reasonable amount of dignity and discretion. Whatever she might suffer inwardly, outwardly she had not compromised herself. She had remembered Walter Smith, when the one man in the world she loved seemed to be within her reach. The premium was a heavy one to pay; but she had paid it. Edward Trefusa had gone away, believing she was engaged to another. Now her path, however rough, was straight and plain.

"There must be no looking back," she mused. "I am not the only woman that will carry through life and down to the grave a sweet and tender memory—a little romance, unspoken and unsuspected;" and she swept her hand swiftly across her eyes.

"Ah, well," she sighed, "such is life. We none of us get all we want—some get less than others. These heartaches are premiums paid to experience. I shall grow resigned in time, as other people have done before me."

She was fairly calm and collected by the time she reached Green Bank. She was a little surprised that her aunt did not come into the hall to greet her as she usually did; but no suspicion of the storm that was about to burst crossed her mind.

When she entered the dining-room she found her aunt sitting with her face in her hands, her elbows on her knees, staring into the fire.

"Are you tired, waiting for me, aunty dear?" Dorothy asked in her rich, musical voice.

But Miss Jane neither spoke nor moved.

"Are you not well, aunty dear?" Dorothy asked, coming nearer.

Miss Jane started and sat bolt upright.

"Don't 'dear' me," she snapped, in hard, rasping tones; "and don't come any nearer. You are a disgrace to me and to yourself, and to everybody connected with you."

"Aunty!" Dorothy exclaimed aghast.

"I'm aunt to you no longer," was the quick reply; "your conduct puts you out of court. I've thought it all out as I have sat here."

"My conduct? May I ask what you mean?"

"You may ask what you like. You know what I refer to. Where have you been since you left Penmewan Farm? Who have you been with? Who is the man that has been making love to you with his arm round your waist? Do you think I don't know? And do you imagine that I will tolerate such conduct? Are you not ashamed of yourself? Are you not ashamed to cross the threshold of a respectable house?"

Dorothy drew herself up to her full height, and her magnificent eyes flashed fire.

"Be careful what you say, aunty," she said with studied deliberation. "I am your niece, but you shall not insult me. I have done nothing that I am ashamed of."

"You are not ashamed! Not ashamed!" Miss Jane almost shrieked. "Do you deny that you have been with the young squire, and that he has been making love to you?"

"I do not deny that I met Mr. Edward Trefusa in returning from Penmewan. I do not deny that I walked with him, as he was coming my way, or that we stood for some time talking by Varco's stile."

"And you defend such conduct?"

"I could not help meeting him. I could not prevent his talking to me."

"Nor his arm from stealing round your waist?" Miss Jane interposed bitterly.

"That, I presume, was the result of a sudden impulse," Dorothy answered quietly, "and was not repeated."

"I don't want you to enter into any further confession or defence," Miss Jane said, lowering her voice. "I have heard quite enough. You must go away from here. Go back to your father."

"Very good; I will go to-morrow, unless you want me to go to-night."

"No, I don't want you to go to-night. I wish you to go in the daylight."

"Thank you, aunty. You will regret these insinuations some day."

"And I hope you will regret bringing trouble upon respectable people."

"I do regret it very much, but some day you will discover that the trouble is not so much of my making as your own."

"I have not invented the story," Miss Jane said shortly.

"No, but you have put your own interpretation upon it, which is a false one. But perhaps you would not mind telling me the name of the kind friend who must have come to you post-haste after so successfully playing the part of eavesdropper."

"You would like to know?"

"I should very much."

"Well then, it was Walter Smith. He came here to

spend the night, and learning you were not at home, he started to meet you."

"With your consent?"

"Of course."

"You did not object to my crossing the fields with him?"

"Indeed no. Besides, he regarded himself as good as engaged to you."

"I never promised him."

"You never said *No* to him."

"And where is he now?"

"On the way to Camelbridge, I presume. He said it was impossible for him to stay here after what had occurred."

"Indeed! So he is not likely to trouble me again."

"He has too much self-respect."

For a moment Dorothy was silent. Then, raising her head suddenly, she said:

"I have one request to make."

"And what is that?"

"That you do not write to my father. You are prejudiced to the eyes. You would unwittingly and unconsciously tell him what is not true. Let me go away quietly as I came. If I have to fight my battle alone, at least let me have fair play."

"But your father ought to know."

"Perhaps so, but you are not the proper person to tell him, and for the sufficient reason that you don't know yourself."

"You are not complimentary."

"No, but my reputation is at stake, and it is not for you to make my way more difficult."

"Very good. Heaven knows I don't want to write to your father. Not a line has passed between us since he married again. I will leave you to make your peace with him in your own way."

“That will do. To-morrow I will leave ;” and she turned at once and left the room.

She spent most of the night in packing her boxes. She was too angry to shed tears over the coming separation. Indeed, she felt it would be a relief to get away. She managed to steal about an hour’s sleep, and then she got up and dressed. By noon she was a hundred miles away from St. Aubyn and was still speeding toward the North.

CHAPTER III.

MAN PROPOSES.

“ Man, proud man,
Dress'd in a little brief authority ;
Most ignorant of what lies most assured.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE funeral of Mrs. Treleven was one of the most largely attended ever known in St. Aubyn. But there was a reason for that. The Trelevens were highly respectable people, of course. But that in itself was not sufficient to account for the large concourse of people that gathered from all the countryside. The truth is, a whisper had spread through the parish during the evening of the previous day that something had happened at Pendormic—something fateful and momentous—but what it was nobody appeared to know. Everybody, however, was on the *qui vive*. Everybody was eager to inquire of everybody else, and as fate would have it, no one was able to vouchsafe any authentic information. A large number of apocryphal stories were flying about, but most of them were so absurd that they were discounted at once.

At length some obscure individual suggested that it was almost certain that somebody at the funeral on the following day would know the truth, and would be ready to impart it. The suggestion was seized upon instantly, and during the

next twelve or fifteen hours it travelled the entire length and breadth of the parish.

Twenty years ago in Cornwall, a funeral—apart altogether from the character and position of the departed—was regarded as an exceedingly interesting event. It was a time when neighbours foregathered, and discussed the weather, the crops, and the latest sensation in politics. Working men took half-holiday without leave, and donned their Sunday best, and indulged in a game of skittles while the grave was being filled. At any decent funeral, all the news of the parish was discussed, with due solemnity of manner, it is true, but with great earnestness and zest notwithstanding.

Needless to say that at the funeral of Mrs. Treleven the virtues of the deceased were by no means the chief topics of conversation. Little by little the truth had leaked out respecting Trefusa's heir, notwithstanding the reticence of the Pendormic folk generally; and by patching together the various bits of apparently authentic information, a fairly correct version of the case was arrived at.

The excitement was intense, and all the more intense because it had to be so rigorously suppressed. No such sensation had ever before disturbed the somnolent life of St. Aubyn. The immediate concerns of the funeral were in danger of being entirely overlooked. The whisper of voices, like the sound of wind in pine-trees, pervaded the entire assemblage, and even made itself felt in the church. The service at the graveside fell mainly on deaf ears, and the benediction was hailed with a sigh of relief. The mourners threaded their way back through the crowd unnoticed, except that an occasional meaning glance was thrown at Kitty. She had once been courted by the man who had so cleverly duped the squire, but whose trick had now been exposed. They wondered what she thought of

her old sweetheart now, or whether she thought of him at all.

The story was so strange as to be almost incredible, and after the mourners had departed, the major portion of the crowd adjourned to the King's Arms; others filled the workshop of Ezra Drake, while a few loitered in little knots in the fore-street, and angled for further news. Old memories were revived as if by the touch of magic—old stories retold with fresh interest and gusto. Although thirty years had elapsed since Abram Fowey stole away from Briar Nook, heart-broken and almost in despair, there were a great many people who still remembered him, and could recall his words and looks. To the younger people, of course, he was but a name—a name that was heard less and less frequently as time passed on, and but for this sudden and startling revelation of his doings would soon have passed out of memory.

There were a few who openly commended what Abram had done. They said it was the only way open to him of getting back his rights, and declared that they would have done the same thing in similar circumstances. These people characterized Edward as an idiot, said that he was much too squeamish for this world, and blamed him for exposing his father's doings, particularly after the barefaced manner in which old Peter had robbed him.

These people, however, were in a decided minority. To openly advocate wrong-doing required courage; yet, all the same, there were very few who expressed any sympathy with Peter Trefusa. Abram Fowey's action might be wrong, but it served Peter right; and through all the conversation there ran an undertone of regret that the trick had been found out.

Edward had become a general favourite in the neighbourhood. He had shown such genuine interest in the well-being

of the tenants, had entered so thoroughly into the life of the people, and withal was so approachable, so free from pride and from vice generally, that he occupied a larger place in their hearts and affections than either he or they knew.

Everyone whose opinion was worth having admired his conduct in giving up so readily what was not his own. But they were, nevertheless, very grieved that he was not Trefusa's heir, for it was very unlikely they would have so good a one in his place.

Meanwhile, Peter kept wandering round his big house like a man demented. Now he was sullen and moody and almost tearful, and not a word could be got out of him anyhow. At other times he stormed and raved in the most shocking manner, and frightened the servants half out of their wits by his violence.

He did not know until Edward was beyond recall that he had left the house. When he snarled at him through the door, and told him to go away, he had no idea that he contemplated leaving Pendormic without more ado. He supposed that he would remain a few days at the very least, and he was quite willing that he should do so. As a matter of fact, the old man had got to be very fond of his supposed heir, and would have kept him altogether if he could have done so without loss of dignity. In some unaccountable way, Edward had touched into life all that was best in Peter's heart and character, and had rooted himself into his withered affections.

Peter was not conscious how much Edward was to him until he was left alone. When he learned on the following morning that the young man had actually gone away, he woke up to the fact that he had lost nearly everything that he cared to possess.

Whether he was more sorrowful or angry he did not know. He was undoubtedly both, and the more acutely

he felt his sorrow, the more fiercely blazed his anger. That he should grieve over the departure of a Fowey seemed incredible. It made him madder than the most frantic lunatic in Bodmin Asylum. So he alternately stormed and grieved.

He felt too, as he had never done before, the bitter irony of life. He had got nearly everything he had struggled for. Wealth and long life had been granted him. Very few, if any, of his schemes had miscarried. His trickery and dishonesty had in no instance been found out, and yet nothing had yielded him any satisfaction. His apples had turned to ashes. His pleasures had been riddled with pain.

If he had failed in life there would have been some reason for his unhappiness. If he had been tortured by ill-health, or ground down by poverty or trampled over by his enemies, the case would have been different; but his health had been magnificent, his wealth had steadily increased without effort of his own, while his enemies had all gone under. True, Abram Fowey had gained a brief advantage; but that had been now exposed.

No; looking at his life as a whole, it had been a great success. And yet down in his heart of hearts he knew it had been an unmitigated failure. His triumphs brought him no satisfaction. His conquests bore no crown.

He knew that he ought to rejoice that Edward had gone away without giving him any trouble; instead of which it would be a relief if he could only sit down in some lonely corner and cry.

He wondered sometimes if his powers were failing, if his brain was softening, or if he was going to be ill. It was not like a Trefusa to act as he was doing. He was most himself when his anger got above his grief, and he could curse everything and everybody without let or hindrance.

He was in one of his angry moods when he sent for Mr.

Carve. He imagined that all his troubles were due to the lawyer. If Mr. Carve had not played the fool, he would not be in his present plight.

It was the evening of Mrs. Treleven's funeral, and his housekeeper had brought him word that all St. Aubyn was in an uproar, that the fiasco of the birthday celebrations was in everybody's mouth, and that scores of people were openly rejoicing that he had been made a fool of.

This acted on his nerves like a tonic. To be laughed at made him angrier than anything else in the world.

He started to his feet in a moment.

"Made a fool of, eh?" he muttered. "Laughing at me, are they? By Heaven! and they may well do it. Send Job at once for Mr. Carve. Tell him I want him this instant. There, don't loiter. Do you hear?"

Within an hour Mr. Carve was shown into Peter's den.

Peter stopped in his restless walk round the room and glared at the lawyer, but he did not speak.

"You want to see me particularly, I understand?" Mr. Carve questioned meekly.

"I do; sit down."

Mr. Carve sat down and waited.

Peter took several more turns round the room. His lips twitched nervously. His hands were tightly clenched.

Outwardly Mr. Carve was very calm, but his face was paler than usual. He knew that a storm was brewing, and was preparing himself for it.

"You have heard what they are saying in St. Aubyn, I suppose?" Peter said at length, in quiet, unnatural tones, stopping suddenly in front of his visitor.

"No, sir. I have not been near St. Aubyn to-day."

"Kept away on purpose, I presume. Didn't care to hear the yokels discuss your professional incompetence, eh?"

"I do not know what you mean," Mr. Carve said quietly

"You don't, eh? Well, that is not surprising. Take away the things you don't know, and there's nothing left."

"Sir!"

"Ay, you may well say 'Sir!' Do you know that you have made me the laughing-stock of the county; that every fool who knows me is chuckling over my discomfiture; that every tenant on Pendormic is inwardly rejoicing that I have been duped?"

"That is no fault of mine."

"No fault of yours? I tell you it is all your fault. Had you not been a born idiot, you would not have been imposed upon as you were."

"I have never admitted that I was imposed upon," Mr. Carve said defiantly.

"That only shows thy density," Peter said, stamping his foot. "Everything is as clear as daylight. Good Lord! I don't blame Abram Fowey for doing what he did. I'd have done it myself. But how in the name of common-sense a lawyer did not see through it in a moment is beyond me."

"I made all possible inquiries," said the lawyer calmly, "and you have no proof yet that I was deceived."

"No proof?" and Peter laughed bitterly. "I wish to Heaven I had no proof. Why, even Whittle admits thy stupidity."

"Mr. Whittle admits no such thing," said Mr. Carve with dignity. "But if this is all you have to say to me, I will bid you good-evening."

"Not so fast, please. Having made a laughing-stock of me, and the by-word of the neighbourhood, I want to tell you that I shall not again require your services. Mr. Whittle is, I know, retiring from the firm. That will end our connection. To place my affairs twice in the hands of a fool would write me down as fit for a lunatic asylum."

Mr. Carve rose to his feet with quiet dignity and smiled.

"I should not like to guarantee that you are not fit for a lunatic asylum," he said quietly. "You are acting in this matter, I understand, without professional advice. You are assuming that every statement in the papers you have got possession of is authentic, that every signature is genuine. Very good. There is a saying that the man who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client. You may discover some day that it was not your solicitor that was duped, but yourself. With respect to the future, I can assure you your wishes quite meet my own. I am thankful to be free of you in every possible way."

He had steadily moved towards the door while he was speaking, and before Peter could reply he had pulled it open and disappeared.

Peter sat down in an easy-chair and groaned. He felt that he had been worsted again. He had called Mr. Carve an idiot and dismissed him, but he had gained nothing by so doing. He had simply added to the utter loneliness of his life. Whom had he now to lean upon? To whom could he go for advice? Mr. Whittle was past work, and he had not a friend left in the wide world.

And this was life, and what generally would be regarded as a successful life. He had health, wealth, and length of days. He had prospered more than any of the companions of his youth. He had outlived them all. And for what? To reap as he had sown! To drink the bitter cup he had prepared with his own hand!

Mr. Carve walked briskly away from Pendormic, and made straight for the house of his partner. He did not seem at all concerned that the Pendormic business was to pass henceforth into other hands. Indeed, he was rather relieved, though he deemed it prudent to inform Mr. Whittle without delay.

The aged solicitor heard the news in silence, and a cloud passed over his face.

"It means loss of income, Carve," he said at length. "But I don't think it is a matter to be regretted. If I had never seen Pendormic, I should be a happier man to-day."

"It is impossible to be happy with a client like Trefusa," Mr. Carve answered. "He suspects everybody."

"I will come to the office to-morrow," Mr. Whittle said after a pause, "and go through the papers. I meant to have done it before;" and he raised his hand wearily to his forehead. "I have an awful habit of procrastination, as you know. But I will be down to-morrow morning, first thing."

"Are you not quite as well as usual?" Mr. Carve asked a little anxiously.

"Oh yes! I think so. But there are some things I ought to have attended to long since. I will be down to-morrow, without fail."

Mr. Carve walked to his own house at Penzugla a little less briskly. He was not an impulsive man. His anger did not blaze up in a moment. It was a fire that burned slowly, and gained in intensity with lapse of time. He was far angrier when he left Mr. Whittle's house than when he left Pendormic.

"The old heathen imagines he can insult me with impunity, I presume," he said to himself, with a wintry smile. "But if God spares his miserable life he shall find out his mistake. Idiot, am I? By Heaven! if I ever get the chance he shall suffer."

Mr. Whittle appeared very uncomfortable after his junior had left.

"I've been a fool to keep those papers so long," he muttered to himself, as he paced restlessly up and down the room. "They gave me the upper hand of Trefusa, it

is true, but if by any chance they should fall into Carve's hands now that Trefusa has dismissed him, he'd play the very devil. I vowed I'd burn them after the first attack. I ought to have done so. Life's uncertain, and one's good name is something, even after one's dead. But I'll go down first thing to-morrow morning and get it done."

Mr. Whittle climbed the stairs to his bedroom with slower steps than usual that night. It was the last time he ever assayed the task. Before morning an attack of paralysis had deprived him of both speech and movement.

CHAPTER IV.

A DISCOVERY.

“To-day is ours, we have it here. . . .
To the gods belongs to-morrow.”

COWLEY.

MR. CARVE'S opportunity came in a way he had not expected. Two days after Peter had so summarily and insultingly dismissed him he found himself the only surviving partner of the firm of Messrs. Whittle and Carve, as well as the only acting executor of Mr. Whittle's estate. It was a great shock to him when he learned that his partner had been smitten down with an attack of paralysis, and as soon as possible he hurried to his bedside. It was a painful interview. Mr. Whittle's eyes spoke volumes, but his lips were dumb. It was clear enough he had something upon his mind which he wished to disclose, some request he wanted to make; but every effort to speak ended in failure. Mr. Carve was not an emotional man, but the pleading, pathetic look in his dying partner's eyes haunted him for weeks after. He never felt so helpless before—so absolutely powerless! He sat and looked into those strangely pathetic eyes, and asked a hundred questions, hoping in that way to probe his wishes—to find out what was upon his mind; but the eyelids would close after every question. He never got on the right track.

Mr. Carve remained with his old friend nearly the whole

of the day. Whenever he spoke of going, tears would come into the dying man's eyes and roll down his cheeks, for he had no power to wipe them away. So Mr. Carve remained hour after hour, and speculated deeply on the mystery of life and death.

Mr. Whittle did not appear to suffer much physically, but it was clear to all who came near him that he was in great distress of mind. Again and again he made frantic efforts to articulate, but every attempt ended in pathetic failure. It was a sad close of a busy and successful life. What terror haunted him in those last hours no one knew.

Mr. Carve would gladly have escaped from the spell of those wistfully beseeching eyes. But he had not the heart to go away. For a dozen years he had been his senior's constant companion, and during all that time he had worked with him without a jar, and had been entrusted with all the secrets of the firm. Of what lay back of those years he knew nothing, nor did he inquire. Occasionally he had heard hints of transactions between his senior and Mr. Trefusa which he could not quite understand, and now and then there was vague talk of three-cornered transactions between Trefusa, Whittle, and one Blewitt (deceased), who was steward of Sir Henry Probus. But these stories did not interest him much. Moreover, it was no concern of his what his partner did or did not do previous to his connection with the firm.

His own dealings with Mr. Whittle had been of the pleasantest kind. Moreover, his senior had always appeared so scrupulously honourable, that he could not bring himself to believe that he had ever been anything else.

"There is no man living," he argued, "that some people will not speak ill of. He may be as pure as the snow, but some hypocrite, having a beam in his own eye, will see the shadow of it and call it evil."

So he judged Mr. Whittle as he found him, and discounted the gossip that now and then reached his ears.

Mr. Whittle died at midnight, never having regained the power of speech, and the day after his funeral Mr. Carve began to go carefully through his papers. Everything relating to his own affairs was in perfect order. His will was a very simple one, though to carry out all its provisions would involve a considerable amount of labour. To this task Mr. Carve devoted himself very assiduously, and it took him well on into the New Year.

Then he began to rummage amongst older documents. He found drawers crammed full of papers of all kinds, most of them neatly docketed and tied with red tape. The majority of these papers seemed absolutely valueless: copies of wills that had long since been proved and administered; abstracts of leases that had run out a generation ago; letters about nothing in particular, written by hands long since fallen into dust.

Nevertheless, the reading of these ancient records gave him a considerable amount of pleasure, and consumed much more time than he was aware of. Mr. Carve, however, disliked hurry. He was a careful, methodical man, who arranged his work with strict regard to order and decorum, and would not go beyond his usual pace to please anybody. Each drawerful of papers he examined in the order in which they were arranged, and so it happened that the most interesting, and in some respects the most important, packet of papers was the last to be noticed.

Mr. Carve gave a little gasp when he had read a few sentences, and turned hurriedly to the signature:

“Peter Trefusa.”

He gave a low whistle; then settled himself back in his chair, and began to read again with great care and deliberation. A second time he read through the letter, then laid it

down and took up the second. In this way he read through the whole bundle of papers. But he manifested no surprise after the first start, and his face remained calm and passionless. He had himself well in hand—a fact on which he secretly prided himself.

For some time after he had replaced the papers in their original position, he sat quite motionless, with his elbows on the arms of his chair, the tips of his fingers brought close together, and his eyes staring into vacancy.

Outside, the brilliant sunshine of an early April afternoon was flooding all the landscape; and not a stone's-throw away a thrush was flooding the air with melody. But Mr. Carve did not see the sunshine or hear the song. He had got hold of a problem, which he was trying to work out, and was trying again to decipher the riddle of Mr. Whittle's eyes as he lay dying. He remembered, too, the last conversation he had with his late partner, and the anxiety he expressed to destroy certain papers. Were these the papers, he wondered; and if so, was it Providence that had intervened to prevent their destruction?

Mr. Carve was not likely to come to any hasty conclusions on these questions. It was a point with him never to do things in a hurry. He went home at length to Penzugla (where also he had an office for the convenience of clients who lived on the other side of the parish), passing on his way the lane that led down to Briar Nook. For several minutes he paused, leaning his elbows on the gate, and looked at the little farmstead as if he would familiarize himself with all its details. He had often noticed its line of fir-trees; its orchard at the back, marked off from the meadows by a double thorn hedge; its winding trout stream, and the larger fields stretching up the hillside beyond. It had not changed much since Abram Fowey went away thirty years before. The fir-trees were gnarled and broken,

and the apple-tees showed unmistakeable signs of old age ; but the meadows were as green as ever, and the stream sang its happy song, untouched by time, and even the house showed as yet no sign of decay.

" I don't wonder it broke the old man's heart," Mr. Carve muttered to himself, as he turned away from the gate and walked slowly down the road. " And now about restitution. Can he be forced into it ?" and he thrust his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, and bent his head slightly forward.

Mr. Carve felt morally certain what he would do. The moment his eye rested on Peter Trefusa's letter his mind was made up. But it was a pleasant little conceit of his that he never acted on impulse ; it was an article of his creed that he never would do anything except after mature consideration. So he debated the question with himself during the whole of that evening, and for many evenings after, though his mind was made up from the first.

Mr. Carve had considerably more time for reflection than was good for him. The loss of Peter Trefusa as a client affected him in many ways. People began to question his ability as a lawyer, and went elsewhere for legal advice. Indeed, he realized only too painfully that his reputation was seriously compromised, and, concurrently, that his income was much reduced. This did not tend to make him more kindly disposed toward the Squire of Pendormic. If he felt bitter towards Peter on the day of his dismissal, he felt doubly bitter six months later. The desire for revenge steadily grew, though he did not call it by that name. Revenge carried an ugly sound with it. He preferred the word 'compensation.'

Mr. Carve brooded over his discovery with very mixed feelings. While he rejoiced that it gave him the upper hand of Peter Trefusa, he felt genuinely sorry that it

covered the memory of his late partner with reproach. It was a clever conspiracy, and as heartless as it was clever; and yet, clever as it was, it had so many weak places in it, and was exposed to so many accidents and contingencies, that the wonder was it had not been exposed long since. In truth, all the chances and accidents had been favourable to Peter and those who worked with him. "Luck," as we term it, had been on the side of the rogues. Directly Sir Henry Probus had completed the sale of Pendormic, he went on a hunting expedition in the North-west of Canada, and was not heard of again for several years. Blewitt, his steward, who was the chief rogue in the business, died soon after. John Fowey, when the local courts decided that he had no case, quietly gave up the ghost; while Abram, under a crushing sense of defeat, flung up the sponge and went abroad. Had John Fowey lived, and had he possessed the courage and means to carry the case into the higher courts, there is little doubt the roguery would have been unmasked, though in that case he would have been no better off, for the law-costs would have more than swallowed up his little estate.

Peter Trefusa and those who acted with him counted on that fact. A poor man will not often go to law with the rich. An empty pocket has not much chance against a well-filled purse, even in this land of justice and freedom, and, as it happened, events turned out more favourably than was anticipated.

It seemed clear enough to Mr. Carve, as he pondered over the papers, that Peter Trefusa had paid dearly enough for Briar Nook. But the money had gone into the pockets of Whittle and Blewitt. Blewitt, as Sir Henry's steward, had not only made out the deeds of sale, but he also held them as mortgagee, having advanced John Fowey two-thirds of the purchase-money at a safe six per cent.

When Peter Trefusa entered into negotiations for the

purchase of Pendormic, he kicked against what he called the intrusion of John Fowey. To be the possessor of an estate in the centre of which one of the most picturesque bits was owned by another man was simply preposterous and intolerable, and so the negotiations fell through, or, more correctly, hung fire for two or three years.

It was during this period that Peter, Whittle, and Blewitt put their heads together, and formulated a little scheme for the purpose of defrauding John Fowey out of his rights. Blewitt was then in possession of John's deeds. Hence there was no difficulty in rendering John's title not only defective, but worthless.

How all this was manœuvred need not be told in these pages. When John paid Mr. Blewitt the last of the mortgage-money, and received a large packet of neatly-folded papers, all closely written, and neatly tied with red tape, he had no doubt whatever as to their genuineness. He did not take the trouble to read them. He would have been little the wiser if he had done so. He took them home, locked them away in an oak chest that stood by his bedside, and felt supremely happy.

Well, the sequel to all this was ancient history now; but it was none the less interesting to Mr. Carve on that account.

"I'll make the past live again," he muttered to himself. "I'll compel that old serpent to disgorge all he has swallowed. I'll reinstate Abram Fowey into the home of his fathers."

This was the conclusion Mr. Carve came to after a week's deliberation. He conveyed no hint to Peter of the discovery he had made, nor did he take anyone into his confidence. He wrote a long letter to Abram Fowey, in which he informed him that he had discovered something to his advantage, and advised him to come straight to England with as little delay as possible. That done, he began to prepare for the legal tug of war.

CHAPTER V.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

“The Fates but only spin the coarser clue ;
The finest of the wool is left for you.”

DRYDEN.

Two days after Mr. Carve had posted his letter, Abram Fowey and Ned landed on English soil. It was a memorable day for both. Abram was grave and depressed ; Ned was brimming over with happiness and enthusiasm. The older man was wondering if he would find things as he had left them, or if the reality would be as he had so long pictured it, or if the glamour would not vanish before his actual vision. Ned had no doubts respecting anything. It was sufficient for him that the dream of a lifetime was at last realized, that he had planted his feet on the historic land that was the wonder of the world.

He was a handsome young fellow, and on the voyage home had made himself a general favourite. No one wondered that Abram was fond of him. Elderly ladies were heard to declare that a father who was not proud of such a son did not deserve to have a son. Nor was the praise extravagant.

The promise of his youth had been more than fulfilled in the man. His exuberant spirits had never lacked the ballast of strong common-sense. His splendid physique

was the index of a finely-wrought moral nature. He was taller than Edie by at least an inch, quicker in movement, and with a brighter and more animated expression in his eyes. There was nothing of the recluse about him. He would never busy himself in books if there were any outdoor pursuits to be followed, and from choice would always select work of hand in preference to work of brain.

Up to within a few months ago he had seen very little hope of visiting England. In truth, fortune had gone against them. Abram had been in the habit of declaring that his luck turned on the very day Edie left for England; that from that day forward misfortune, and misfortune alone, had dogged his steps.

This was a source of considerable mental disquietude to Abram. It led him to ponder deeply on the subject of Providence and the operation of moral law. He could not possibly forget what he had done. That page of his life-history was written with indelible ink. Whether he regretted it or gloried in it, the struggle he had passed through had left its mark upon him—a mark that time would never erase.

He fought bravely with misfortune year after year, and almost starved himself that he might send Ned to college. Sometimes he was ready to give up in despair, and more than half disposed to end an existence that contained no ray of hope. The harder he struggled, the more fortune seemed to frown upon him.

Ned, when he was seventeen, seeing how matters stood, refused to go back to college.

"No, dad," he said; "it isn't fair that you should kill yourself to maintain me. I'm a man in size if not in age. Let's work together, and see if we can defy fortune between us."

"I'd like you to remain at college a year longer, at any

rate," Abram answered dreamily, while a sudden mist came over his eyes.

"But you know you can't afford it," Ned answered, "and what's the good?"

"Perhaps our luck will turn if we hold on a bit longer," Abram replied with a pathetic shake in his voice.

"I think the proper thing is for me to help you to turn it," Ned answered with a laugh.

"I don't know, Ned. I think sometimes I ought never to have left Goolong Creek. I did make a living there anyhow, and even saved a bit."

"And here you've lost all that you saved?"

"That's true, my boy. At first I seemed likely to get on. In fact, I did get on. But when Edie went away the tide turned, and it's been running out ever since."

"Perhaps it'll begin to come in now."

"That's what I keep hoping. I've as good a chance as other people, and I'm as good a man as a lot of fellows who do get on. But somehow luck's against me."

"Well, anyhow, I'm going to help you. It's quite time I began to earn my own living."

"I did hope to make a doctor of you, Ned, or a lawyer——"

"Neither of them is in my line, father, though I wouldn't mind being a vet, I'm so fond of animals. But what's the use of worrying over what can't be helped?"

"Not a bit of use, my boy. But if you can show people how it is to be avoided, you'll make your fortune. It's the clap-trap of every Cheap Jack orator and demagogue to say, 'Don't worry,' and frequently they are the greatest of all worrits themselves. It's not advice we want, but information."

"What a long speech for you, father!" Ned said with a laugh; and then the conversation drifted into other channels.

But, somehow, the tide did not turn even with Ned's help. If hard work and economy were ever deserving of reward, Abram and Ned should have grown rich. But from some inexplicable cause the opposite result obtained. They got steadily poorer, till at length the business had to be given up, and they had to earn a living by doing any kind of work that came in their way. They gave up writing to Edie. They had nothing to write about save their misfortunes and poverty, and they were both too proud to parade such matters, or to seem, even in the remotest degree, to ask for sympathy.

Ned also wondered if it would not be a relief to his foster-brother to break all connections with his old life. He might have still a sentimental regard for them, but he lived and moved in a sphere so far above them that there could be no pleasure in remembering what had been.

Edie's letters, it was true, were always full of the warmest regard. They looked in vain in what he wrote for any indications of change. Such change as there was, was in themselves.

After a day's toil, they were too tired to write—too dispirited. If they had prospered it would have made all the difference in the world, but no one likes to speak of his defeats. There is an old saying that "no news is good news." But like many another proverb that passes for gospel, it will not bear examination. "No news" is often bad news. Many a high-spirited lad neglects to write home for the simple reason that he has no good news to send. He went away elated with the prospect of success, and he's too proud to confess his failure.

It was much the same with Ned. While he could write to Edie about his doings at college, letters passed at pretty regular intervals. But when he began to feel the pinch of poverty and failure, he gave up writing.

"What's the use?" he said to himself. "We've no longer anything in common. We shall never meet again."

Abram grew more and more silent and depressed. From his point of view, life appeared an utter failure. Nothing happened as one desired. Nothing brought any satisfaction. Even love was crowned with thorns, and honest labour spelt direst poverty.

He was in one of his most gloomy moods one evening, when Ned startled him by suggesting that they should try their luck at the diggings. The gold fever had long since spent itself. The rush was over. Many of the mining camps were practically deserted. The tide of human life had set steadily towards the towns and cities.

Abram took his pipe from his mouth and looked at Ned with inquiring eyes.

"I mean it, father," the young man answered with energy. "There's no denying we are dead failures here; and what's to hinder us from trying our luck somewhere else?"

"I'm too old for the diggings, my boy," Abram answered gloomily.

"Not a bit of it, dad. You're barely fifty yet. That isn't old, and you're as strong as ever you were."

"But I know nothing about mining."

"You know how to work, and that's more than most of the folks who go to the diggings know."

"Perhaps so; but they're rough places, and a man ought to know what he's after."

Ned laughed.

"There'll be no difficulty on that score," he said. "We shall be after the gold, and the sooner we tumble across a nugget, the sooner we shall get away."

"Nuggets are not picked up every day, my boy."

"No, they would get too common if they were. But they

are still picked up occasionally, and we stand just as good a chance as anyone else."

"I don't know about that. Luck doesn't seem to come our way."

"It hasn't yet, but that is no reason why it shouldn't. I tell you, father, I'm sick of these weary streets and the endless grind. We can't do worse, go where we may. There's just a chance we may do better. I've been thinking the matter over for weeks, and I've resolved to try my luck. I can only fail—that's just what I've done here. If I'd anything to lose, it would be different, but I haven't. When a fellow is at the bottom he can't get any lower. Now, father, what do you say to it?"

"I hardly know, my boy. We do manage to keep a roof over our heads here."

"We're poor apologies for men if we can't manage to do that anywhere."

"Yes, that is so. We can't be much worse off, can we?"

"And what is more, there is no chance of getting better off in this place."

"And if I don't go, you'll go without me. Is that what you mean?"

"Well, dad," he said with a feeble smile, "that is about the plain English of it. I've got all my life before me, and, you know, 'nothing venture, nothing win.'"

Abram said no more that night. But next morning he announced his readiness to start at the earliest possible moment.

Ned was delighted. In his present mood he was ready to welcome any change, even though it might be a change for the worse.

It did not take them many days to dispose of their household effects and pack their bags. There were no social ties to be sundered, no sacred memories to move them to

tears, no bitter farewells to be spoken. Indeed, when once their minds were made up, they were glad to get away. Abram entered into the spirit of the enterprise with a zest that was an astonishment even to himself, and in his all too pathetic eyes the light of hope began to shine once more.

But the struggle was not ended yet. Ned had hoped that the knowledge of geology and mineralogy which he had gained at college would stand him in good stead when he got to the gold-fields, but in this he was doomed to disappointment. The finding of gold seemed to be entirely a matter of luck. Some of the diggers had toiled for years and scarcely made bread. Others in a few weeks tumbled across a fortune.

The place on which they lighted rejoiced in the name of Marlneposa. Even Ned confessed that a more God-forsaken-looking place he had never seen. A number of huts were scattered here and there over the brow and slopes of a low, barren hill, but there was no attempt at streets, or even decent roads. There were no settlers in Marlneposa, except a few store and saloon keepers. All the others were adventurers, attracted by the hope of finding gold, and directly a man did find a nugget, he made for more civilized parts with all possible speed.

Ned and Abram had no difficulty in getting a claim, or a hut to live in. Already an exodus had set in. The departures were far more numerous than the arrivals. Now and then there would be a rush. Some lucky individual would drop upon a nugget, and the news would spread like wildfire. Then months would pass away, and hope would die out of the diggers' hearts.

For nine long months Abram's ill-luck followed him with dogged persistency. Never did men work harder than the Foweyes, or put in longer days, but they barely earned sufficient to keep body and soul together. Abram would

have given up after the first six months, and tramped back again to the region of civilization; but Ned's enthusiasm was not so easily quenched.

"Never say fail, father," he would say, as Abram smoked moodily in the shadow of their hut. "We are not worse off than many other folk, and there is no denying that there is gold in Marlneposa."

"Maybe there is," Abram would grunt, "but it ain't for such as us."

"Let's wait and see, at any rate. We're only new-comers yet."

"I feel as though I'd been here years."

"Time does travel slowly, it is true; but perhaps our luck will turn, sometime."

"Perhaps," Abram would grunt, and then relapse again into silence.

When nine months had passed, and Dame Fortune still continued to shun them, even Ned's exuberant spirits began to fail.

"I really begin to fear, father, that Marlneposa is worked out," he said one morning.

"I've feared that long since," was the answer.

"Then, what do you say to trying our luck somewhere else?"

"Anywhere, lad. To go from here will be a change, if nothing else."

"Very good. Let's clear out to-morrow—unless we have luck to-day," he added after a pause.

Abram smiled wistfully, and led the way into the tunnel they had dug in the hillside.

The long hours of the day passed slowly on, but brought no sign of "luck." The day ended as it began. The two men threw down their picks in silence, and made their way out into the daylight.

Neither of them had any heart left for speech. It seemed as if Providence had deliberately set its face against them.

During the rest of the evening they busied themselves in getting what few things they had together in readiness for their departure on the following day. Abram seemed the less troubled of the two. He had not hoped so much, and consequently his disappointment was not so keen.

Ned sat up long after his father had gone to bed. He felt too restless to retire—too bitterly angry with fate and fortune.

“I’m glad father’s able to sleep, at any rate,” he said at length, as Abram’s heavy breathing indicated that he had reached the pleasant land of slumber. But he showed no disposition to court sleep himself.

He had hoped so much, had built so many airy castles, that it seemed doubly hard to go away and leave their claim to somebody else who might make a fortune in it in a week.

“I wish I hadn’t proposed going away,” he muttered to himself; “we might have stayed the year out, at any rate. It will be awfully vexing if somebody takes up our claim after we have left it and makes a fortune.”

And he went and opened the door, and leaned his shoulder against the lintel, and looked off into the night. The camp appeared to be soundly asleep. No sound of any kind broke the silence. Overhead the stars burned brightly, the Southern Cross being unusually brilliant. But it had no message of hope for Ned. He had reached a lower deep of despair than he had ever before sounded.

“The best thing father and I could do would be to drown ourselves,” he muttered. Then he laughed bitterly. The love of life, the instinct of self-preservation, flamed up in a moment. “It’s very funny,” he went on; “we still cling to existence in spite of everything. From father’s stand-

point and mine, life isn't worth living. We seem to be dead failures, both of us. We go forth again to-morrow to try our luck somewhere else. Well, we can't do worse, that's certain; and yet it seems folly, after toiling nine months, to leave our chance to somebody else."

He came back into the room again after a while, and listened. Abram was still sleeping soundly; his regular breathing was the only sound that broke the stillness.

"I think I'll do it!" he said at length, and he went and stood in the doorway once more. "I don't understand this impulse, but I think I'll follow it. Father will sleep for hours yet. It's the last throw of the dice, and I'll risk it." And closing the door behind him, he hurried swiftly away into the darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

AT LAST.

“Time’s the king of men ;
He’s both their parent, and he is their grave,
And gives them what he will, not what they crave.”

Pericles.

ABRAM woke next morning just as the dawn was struggling through the dust-grimed window of their little hut ; and with something like a groan he turned over on his side, and tried to court sleep again. He had been dreaming of Briar Nook and Kitty Treleven ; had been sitting with her in the shadow of the pine-trees, listening to the wind making dreamy music high overhead, and wondering how it was that Australia had got so mixed up with Cornwall. It was a very happy dream, nevertheless ; for in his companion’s eyes there was a light of love, whilst her hand rested confidently on his arm, and her lips had been pressed close to his.

Then suddenly it came to an end, and he saw the bare walls of their comfortless hut, and realized that a new day had begun, and that he and Ned were going on the tramp once more. He tried to sleep again—he wanted to get back once more in the land of dreams. These were the only happy moments he had : he wished sometimes that he could sleep for ever.

He was wide awake, however. The hard realities of life drove back the angel of slumber.

"I'd better get up," he muttered to himself; "we'd better be on the move as early as possible."

The next moment he was standing on the bare floor, looking with wondering eyes at Ned's unoccupied bed.

"Good heavens! what's become of the lad?" he gasped; and he pulled aside the thin calico curtain that divided the sleeping-apartment from the living-room, and looked eagerly about him. But there was no sign of the young man anywhere.

Without waiting to dress, he rushed to the door. It was unbolted. He pulled it open and looked out. The camp was scarcely stirring yet. Here and there, from chimney-tops, blue columns of smoke ascended straight as a rule into the still morning air. But the real business of the day had not begun.

"What on earth can have become of the boy?" Abram muttered with chattering teeth. "It's not like him to play tricks. I hope he's met with no accident. I must go in search of him as quickly as possible." And rushing back to his bedside, he slipped into his clothes with more alacrity than he had ever shown before, and five minutes later, with his wide-awake crumpled in his hand, he stood bare-headed under the sky. His first business was to examine every nook and corner round his own house. Then he rushed off to make inquiries of his neighbours. No one, however, was able to relieve his anxiety; no noise had been heard in the night—no marks of a struggle could be seen anywhere.

Abram went the round of the camp; looked into a number of pits in the neighbourhood, questioned everybody, likely and unlikely, and finally returned to his own cottage buoyed up by a flickering hope that Ned had returned during his absence.

With trembling hand he pushed open the door and called "Ned!" but only the echo of his own voice answered him back.

With a groan he sat down on the doorstep and stared vacantly about him. Then a sudden thought struck him, and he rose quickly to his feet, and rushed off in the direction of the abandoned claim.

Perhaps Ned had left something there, and had gone to fetch it, and—well, the tunnel might have come together and buried him; or—or—— But he was too agitated to think clearly. He never knew how he covered the ground between his cottage and the mouth of the tunnel. Turning his head a little on one side, he listened for a moment, and a faint click distinctly fell on his ear.

"Ned!" he called, and rushed into the darkness.

"Is that you, father?" came the answer.

"Ay, lad! But what in the name of Heaven are you doing here?"

"I was just coming to waken you," was the reply. "But come and look! It seems almost too good to be true! I'm half afraid I'm dreaming."

"What is it?" Abram cried, rushing forward.

"Gold, father," Ned answered in an awed whisper. "Heaps of it, or else I'm off my head."

The next moment Abram was kneeling by his side, examining a large nugget by the light of their solitary candle.

"What do you think of it, father?" Ned whispered.

But Abram was too agitated to speak. His breath came and went in sudden gasps—his hands trembled as though he had been smitten with ague. He dropped the gold at length, and stared at Ned as though not quite certain of his identity.

"Well?" Ned questioned, returning the stare.

"It's gold, my boy. Let us thank God."

"You are certain, father?"

"Quite."

"Then there is a bigger future here than we shall ever need, for the nugget is only the beginning."

"What?"

"It's true. I've struck a reef that literally gleams with it."

Abram took the candle from Ned's hands and walked forward to the end of the "drift." But no second surprise could equal the first. Had the whole hill been gold, he could not have betrayed any further emotion.

"Had we not better go home now and finish the night out?" Ned said at length.

"Finish the night out?" Abram questioned. "What night?"

"Why, this night. How did you find out that I came here? I left you fast asleep."

"And I slept on till daylight."

"What? I thought I'd been here only about an hour."

"You've been here all the night. But what induced you to come?"

"I don't know. I was seized by a sudden impulse to attempt one more search. I can offer no reason for it, except that I was restless and could not sleep."

"And you struck gold at once?"

"The first throw of the pick brought out a little nugget at its point."

Abram dropped his head and remained silent. His philosophy of life was still at fault, and the ways of Providence were as incomprehensible as ever.

Six months later Abram and Ned stood on English soil in the clear sunshine of early spring.

"We'll not remain in Plymouth," Abram said excitedly. "There's not much to see here. We'll push on to the old home as quickly as possible."

"I'm quite willing," Ned answered; "besides, I'm very curious to see Edie. I wonder if we shall recognise each other?"

"Doubtful, I fancy. A few years make a great difference in young people."

"I don't think his heart will have changed," Ned said with a smile.

"There's no knowing," Abram answered doubtfully. "Circumstances work great changes in people. It's possible we shall find nothing as we have hoped and expected."

"We may find things a great deal better," Ned said cheerfully.

"Anyhow, we'd better not expect too much. You know the old saying, 'Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for verily he shall not be disappointed.'"

"I don't think we are likely to fare badly while we have sufficient money to pay our way," Ned answered good-humouredly. "We're quite certain that we shall not be dependent on anyone."

"Do you know, Ned," Abram said seriously, "that I am quite unable to realize even yet that we have more cash than we shall either of us ever spend. When one has been poor so long, it's difficult to get away from the old feeling."

"Is it?" Ned answered laughingly. "I don't feel that way at all!"

"Don't you want to practise economy at every point? Take third-class tickets, and all that kind of thing?"

"No, I'm afraid I'm not built that way. When I had nothing to spend, why, I spent nothing; but now that I have it I'm going to enjoy it."

"Yes, that's right enough, as far as it goes. But there's no use wasting what one has earned."

"I said nothing about wasting," Ned replied.

"Exactly, but take a case in point. We're going to the station now. Do you think it's worth while to pay first-class fare when we can travel third?"

"Why not?"

"Well, we get no sooner."

"No, but we get more pleasantly. A pennyworth of comfort is always worth a penny. At any rate, that's my view of the matter."

"It's a pity I'm so old, Ned," Abram answered sadly. "Fortune may come to a man too late. When one's been trying to save for thirty years, it becomes almost painful to spend."

"What, when there's plenty at the back of it?"

"It doesn't seem to matter how much there is at the back. The feeling is constant that a shilling's a shilling, and there's only twenty of 'em in a pound."

"Then, I'll save your feelings by being cashier," Ned answered good-humouredly. "I'm not a bit sensitive on the point myself; in fact, I think spending money is great fun. And as this is my first visit to England, why, I will travel into the country of my ancestors first-class."

"As you will, my boy," Abram answered gravely. "The money is more yours than mine."

"And don't forget, dad, that there's plenty of it."

And Ned hurried away to the booking-office and purchased two first-class tickets to Penzugla.

They had not long taken their seats, when the carriage door was pulled open by a porter, and two ladies got in.

"Been shopping," was Ned's unspoken comment, as a number of parcels were handed in and thrown upon the racks.

They took some time to settle themselves comfortably in their places, particularly the elder of the two. She was a pale, nervous-looking lady of uncertain age. She might have been forty, but she looked considerably older than that. Her eyes had a weary, careworn expression in them, her lips were drawn a little at the corners, her forehead was deeply lined, even when her face was in repose.

"Let me see—which end is the engine?" she said, as if making a mental calculation. "And I wonder which way the wind is blowing. Trains are such horrid things. One must either sit with one's back to the engine or get in a draught, and I hardly know which is the worse of the two."

"It will never do for you to sit with your back to the engine," the younger one answered; "that always makes you ill."

Ned turned his head instinctively and looked at her. Her voice was so sweet and refined that it caught his ear in a moment, like a strain of music. Her face harmonized with her voice. Indeed, he thought he had never seen so sweet a face before. A little too pale, some people might think; but it was the expression that charmed him most.

"I am sure she is gentle and kind and good," he said to himself. "I wonder who she is."

The next moment the train gave a jerk as the engine backed against it.

"Oh dear!" said the elder lady. "I believe I've my back to the engine, after all."

Instantly the younger one put her head out of the window.

"Yes, mother, you are on the wrong side," she said. "You will have to take this seat."

"Mother and daughter, eh?" Ned reflected. "Not much alike, at any rate."

The seats were quickly exchanged, much to Ned's

satisfaction. He could look at the younger lady now without appearing to do so.

"I would give a good deal to know her," he reflected, glancing at her furtively over the top of his magazine.

The next moment the guard waved his green flag and the train began to glide slowly out of the station.

Abram sat directly opposite Ned, with his eyes tightly shut. He was in no humour for conversation. He was wondering, as he had wondered a hundred times before, if he would find Cornwall as he had left it. For thirty years he had hungered for the dear homeland. Would he be disappointed? His heart was beating very fast. His lips twitched constantly, but he kept his eyes firmly closed.

The train had not got far on its way before the elderly lady discovered that she had the sun in her eyes, and the blind had a contrary fit, and refused to stay down.

"Oh dear! I think these trains are simply horrid," she said fretfully. "There really is no pleasure in travelling."

Ned laid down his magazine and looked towards her.

"Pardon me," he said, "but would you exchange seats with me? I don't mind the sun in the least. Indeed, I rather like it."

"It is kind of you," was the answer. "Are you sure you don't mind?"

"Not in the least. I'm quite used to the sun, I can assure you."

"Thank you very much;" and with a very gracious smile Mrs. Tom Trefusa crossed to Ned's seat, while he, much to his delight, found himself directly opposite Mona.

"It is kind of you," she said, lifting her sweet eyes to his.

"Please do not mention it," he replied. "In truth, I prefer sitting in the sunshine."

"Mother is a great invalid," Mona said after a pause; "and a railway journey nearly always knocks her up."

"Some people find travelling very exhausting," Ned answered, not knowing exactly what else to say, but anxious to keep up the conversation for the pleasure of hearing his companion's voice.

"I scarcely ever get tired," Mona answered brightly. "Indeed, I like rushing through the country; there is something to my mind exhilarating in watching the fields and trees sweeping past."

"Yes, but, of all the methods of locomotion, I think that being on the back of a high-spirited horse is the best."

"I like that too," was the soft reply. "Indeed, I ride a good deal."

So they chatted pleasantly about many things, and yet about nothing in particular, and to Ned the hours of that journey sped away like a dream. He had never met anyone before who had charmed him so much. Her voice was sweeter than silver bells; her eyes were like mirrors reflecting heaven.

"Who was she?" The question came up a hundred times during that journey, but she gave no hint, and he, of course, could not ask.

He was afraid at every station at which they stopped that she would get out. The thought of never seeing her again grew to be positively painful. He knew it was the sheerest folly on his part to worry over the matter. A chance face in a train! What was that to any man? But the riddle of life is woven of many threads, and the human heart is rarely amenable to reason.

Abram began to stir himself at length. The scenes through which they were passing were growing familiar to him. His eyes shone with unwonted brightness, and now and then became suddenly dim. Every turn and twist of the train awoke some memory to life, and made his heart beat with quicker throb.

At length the train pulled up at Penzugla Road, and Mona and her mother hurriedly got their parcels together.

"You are getting out here?" Ned questioned.

"Yes; we are at home now."

"Allow me to hand out your parcels."

"Thank you, Job will fetch them;" and a liveried servant stepped into the compartment.

Abram and Ned got out hurriedly. Outside the station a brougham was waiting, into which Mona and her mother got at once.

Ned stood still and saw it drive away; then with a sigh he turned to look after his own luggage.

Several people got out at Penzugla, but no one recognised the strangers. A few people looked at them curiously as they passed. Abram felt a lump come into his throat as he glanced hurriedly about him. He recognised no one. He hardly recognised the place. It was as he feared: everything was changed.

"We will leave our luggage here and walk into St. Aubyn," he said to Ned. "It is a pleasant evening, and I want to stretch my legs a little."

"I shall be glad of a walk myself," Ned answered; "but we must have our smaller bags sent on. Is it the King's Arms we stay at?"

In a few minutes Ned had settled with the out-porter, and the two men walked away together in the slanting sunshine.

CHAPTER VII.

HOME AGAIN.

“Sunlight more soft may o’er us fall,
To greener shores our bark may come ;
But far more bright, more dear than all,
That dream of home, that dream of home.”

MOORE.

“ARE you sure they left the train at Penzugla?”

“Yes, mother ; quite sure.”

“I wish I had studied them more closely. I confess I feel quite curious.”

“You do?”

“I do indeed. You know that grandfather is making every effort to find your real cousin.”

“But surely you do not imagine——”

“I don’t know. They have evidently come from abroad, and the younger man is quite a gentleman, and isn’t he handsome?”

“He is certainly very good-looking.”

“It is six months ago since the other went away. It is quite time we were hearing something of the real heir. If you’d only been a boy, Mona, or if my own darling boy hadn’t been drowned, there would have been none of this fuss or worry.”

“But justice is justice, mother,” Mona answered ; “and Uncle Edward’s son should have his due.”

"It will be very strange if we have travelled from Plymouth with him without knowing."

"I don't think it is at all likely," Mona replied after a pause. "They were evidently father and son."

"That makes it look all the more suspicious, Mona. You know he has grown up with that Abram Fowey, supposing himself to be his son."

"But do you think it likely that Fowey would come to England after he had been convicted of such a wicked fraud?"

"I had never thought of that, Mona," Mrs. Tom answered after a pause; and before Mona had time to reply again the carriage had pulled up at the garden-gate.

Meanwhile, Abram and Ned were wending their way slowly along the road in the direction of St. Aubyn. Neither of them appeared in the mood for conversation. Abram's heart was too full for speech. Every tree and bank and cottage awoke in him some tender memory of the past, and brought vividly back to him his vanished youth.

Away from the villa residences of Penzugla, and the feeling of change slipped from him like a mantle. The hills and fields never changed. The hazel-grown hedges were just as they were when he wandered between them as a lad forty years before. Down through the valley the river glided just as it used to do, and away yonder on the slope of the green hill was Pendormic Hall, almost hidden among the trees.

Abram caught his breath several times as some flood of memory swept over him. It was so strange to be back again amid the very scenes that he had cherished in his memory for so many years. He fancied sometimes that he was dreaming, and half expected to wake up and find he was still in Australia.

Suddenly, at a turn in the road, he paused, and gave a

sigh of relief. "Thank God! they are still there," he muttered.

"What are still there, father?" Ned asked.

"The fir-trees, my boy—the fir-trees. I was afraid somebody would have cut them down. You see the house there a little way back?"

"Yes, father."

"That's Briar Nook;" and Abram brushed his hand swiftly across his eyes. "I was born there," he added, after a momentary pause; "and there father and mother died."

"It looks a pretty little corner," Ned said reflectively. "I don't wonder you were sorry to leave it."

Abram did not reply until he reached the end of the lane, where he leaned his elbows on the gate, and regarded the old place with mist-dimmed eyes.

"It hasn't changed," he muttered, "except it seems to have grown smaller. In fact, everything appears to have shrunk—the hills, the fields, the trees, the river; nothing looks quite as big as it used to do."

"That is, perhaps, because you have lived so long in a big country," Ned answered.

"Perhaps so, my boy—perhaps so;" and then he relapsed into silence.

Ned did not disturb him. He saw that he was deeply moved. Every now and then the tears welled up suddenly in his eyes, and his lips trembled with suppressed emotion.

The road ascended to St. Aubyn, and they walked up slowly and in silence past Green Bank, which looked as neat and trim as ever, and along the front street till the King's Arms was reached.

David Treloggas greeted his guests with much profusion. He saw in a moment that they were not commercials. Moreover, during the last six months visitors had been few

and far between. Abram regarded him attentively for a few moments; then a smile overspread his face.

"I knew David as a lad," he reflected; "but I should never recognise him again, so the chances are he won't recognise me—so much the better;" and he followed him into a small sitting-room.

"Yes, this will do," Abram said, glancing quickly round him. "It isn't very big, but my son and I don't require much room. Now, can you get us a square meal—say within half an hour?"

"Oh yes, sir, in less time than that;" and David hurried himself away with great alacrity. In a few moments he was back again. "The luggage be come up from the station," he said; "would you mind selectin' your own, Mr.—Mr.—excuse me, but your name have just slipped me."

"Smith," Abram answered suddenly, and followed the landlord into the hall, while Ned dropped into a chair and laughed.

Half an hour later Abram was seated before a steaming-hot dish of mutton chops, while Ned poured out the tea.

"So we are to be known here by the distinguished name of Smith, are we?" Ned asked.

"For a day or two, till we see how the land lies."

"For a day or two? I intend going to see Edie directly after breakfast to-morrow."

"Well, he will keep dark if we wish him."

"Won't his eyes open with surprise?" Ned questioned. "I wish we could see him to-night."

"There's no occasion for hurry," Abram answered. "Let's get to know all we can first. We'll get the landlord in directly, and pump him."

"You may," said Ned with a laugh, "but I think I shall prefer a ramble round the village. Besides, I want to see

if there's a horse in the stable fit to ride; if there is, I'll have a canter to-morrow morning before breakfast."

Abram smiled wistfully, then answered after a pause: "As you will, my lad, but when you get to my age, you will be glad to rest a bit."

Half an hour later Abram and David were seated before the fire—for the evenings were still chilly—engaged in very earnest conversation.

David, as we have already seen, never objected to what he called a crack with his guests, particularly if there was a chance of a choice cigar during the operation, and Abram rather prided himself on the quality of his incense.

"I reakon you do knaw a good cigar when you do see un," David remarked, eyeing the weed affectionately.

"I guess I know when I smoke it," Abram answered with a smile.

"I'll be bound you do, Mr. Smith," David said blandly. "Yes, there ain't no sort of doubt 'bout that. Though St. Aubyn is a very thriving place, and a remarkable busy place for its size, we don't often get anything as good as this;" and David eyed the cigar again.

"I understand there are some houses for sale in your village," Abram remarked after a pause; "can you tell me anything about them?"

"We do call St. Aubyn a town now," David answered with dignity, "an' tes quite a considerable town too, tes; you ain't properly seen it yet. But as for them housen, they ain't only on lease; there ain't scarce a bit of freehold to be had 'bout 'ere—scarce a bit. Near oal the parish do belong to Trefusa, and he waan't sell—not he."

"Is that so?"

"Ay! An' the leases be fallin' in terrible fast now—terrible fast, sure enough. Do 'ee know Trefusa, now?"

"By report."

"An' a purty report, too, I reckon. Nobody ain't got no good to say of he; he's a reg'lar land-grabber, he is. But 'e's been well sarved out lately, as likely you've heerd?"

"No, I've heard nothing," Abram replied.

"What! not 'bout his heir?"

"No; what about him?" Abram asked quickly.

"Oah, well, it's been the talk of the county; I wonder you aint heerd 'bout it."

"You see, my son and I have been out of the county for a year or two," Abram replied.

"Oh, well, that explains," David remarked. "But it's been a terrible curious affair. I suppose you know all 'bout his gran'cheeld bein' fetched 'ome from Australia, an' all that?"

"I heard about it at the time," Abram remarked, with a curious shake in his voice, "but that was a good many years ago."

"A matter of ten or so. Time do fly terrible fast. I suppose you never heerd 'bout Abram Fowey, and how he and his father were cheated out of Briar Nook? That's thirty year agone now."

"Oh yes, that's a very old story," Abram remarked; "but go on."

"Oah, well, it's a terrible rummy go," and David took two or three long pulls at his cigar—"a very rummy go. Let me see, it'll be a matter of six months ago now."

"What will be a matter of six months ago?" Abram asked uneasily.

"Since it were all bust up, as it were. It was on the day of his comin' of age, too. There were fine rigs at the park. Never anything seen like it in these parts. A reg'lar 'oliday, an' aitin' and drinkin' all the time. But there was what they call a skeleton at the feast, though I

must say he was a very well-spoken gentleman, an' a good customer while he remained."

"I really don't see what you're driving at," Abram said impatiently.

"No? Well, 'tis a terrible in-an'-out story, an' yet 'tes plain enough if you understand all the circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"'Bout young Edward Trefusa gettin' killed, and leaving his boy to the care of Fowey."

"I've heard all about that," interposed Abram.

"Well, then, Fowey just palmed off his own boy as Trefusa's heir, an' kept Edward's boy as his own son."

Abram gasped, and remained silent.

"It was a terrible clever trick, no doubt," David went on, "an' if it hadn't been found out, you see, Fowey would have got back into his own family, not only Briar Nook, but all Pendormic, which wouldn't be bad interest."

"But you say it was found out," Abram said faintly, after a long pause.

"Exactly; that's what I'm a-comin' to. There was a Mr. Spear, who know'd Fowey in Australia, and seed through the trick at the time."

Abram threw the stump of his cigar into the fire, and set his teeth firmly together.

"Well, he seemed to think he might have some pickings as well as other people," continued David. "A terrible 'cute chap he was, too, but he was a bit out of his reckoning. He thought, when he went and told the young squire that he was Fowey's boy, and no Trefusa at all, that he'd give un a few hundreds a year to deep dark. But, bless you! the young squire flings the whole thing up in a moment. 'Ef I bean't no Trefusa,' he said, 'I don't stay here not a single day;' an' he kept his word."

"What?"

“ ‘Tis the solemn truth, sir. ‘Ef my father cheated,’ he says, ‘I’m very sorry, but I caan’t be no party to it;’ an’ he cleared off on the followin’ day, an’ he ain’t never been heerd of since.”

“Cleared off? Do you mean to say he’s left Pendormic?”

“That’s just exactly what he have done now. Let me see: it’s April now. Well, ’twas about the first week in last October as he went away. That makes the biggest hole in haf a year, don’t it?”

But Abram did not heed his host. His thoughts were again back in the past, and he was living through once more that long and bitter struggle which had ended so disastrously. Fortunately, Treloggas could not see his face, for the twilight had deepened rapidly, and the firelight was uncertain and fitful.

For several minutes there was silence in the room, during which Abram lighted another cigar, and passed his case on to David.

“It’s a very curious story,” he said at length, making a great effort to steady his voice; “and how does the old squire take it?”

“Oh, badly, sir—terrible bad! They say he’s madder most of the time than a March hare. You see, he’d got to like the lad terrible hard; an’ he was a fine young man, an’ no two ways about it. At heart old Peter were some fond of him, and that makes him all the madder. You see, he hates the Foweyes and he loves the lad, an’ hate an’ love fall contrary ways, an’ so he’s between the devil an’ the deep sea, as they do say, an’ a cruel time he’s got of it.”

“And is he doing nothing?”

“What, in the way of finding his real gran’son? Oah yes! But they do say he can’t find Abram. He’s cleared out of the place as he was in, so report says. But there’s no knowin’ nothin’ for certain.”

Abram had pretty well recovered himself by this time, and while David had been talking he had been shaping his course of action. The landlord's story had changed everything. It was the unexpected that had again happened, and he would have to act, and without delay.

He rose to his feet at length, and stretched himself.

"Tell my son when he comes in," he said, "that he need not wait up for me."

"Very good, sir."

"I may not be long away, or I may be detained longer than I think."

"Yes, sir. You are not quite a stranger here, sir?"

"Not quite. I came here pretty frequently a few years ago."

"Then, you know your way about?"

"Oh yes, quite well."

"Ef you be in want, now, of a snug little farm, they do saw Polmewan will soon be to let."

"Ah!" and Abram started, and faced his host suddenly.

"You know the farm p'raps?" David queried.

"I think I do. Was it not farmed by somebody of the name of Treleven?"

"Iss, iss; that's the wan. Treleven's on his last legs, poor old chap! His missus were buried about six months agone, and he's never got over it."

"They had a daughter, I think. Who did she marry?"

"Kitty? Oh, she never married nobody. She's been faithful to Abram Fowey, she have. It's strange, too, for she's had some store of chances. But she lives at home still, she do, an' a fine an' purty woman she is."

Abram gave a great gulp, and was silent. A thousand tender memories surged over his heart in a moment.

David eyed him curiously; and Abram, becoming conscious that the landlord was paying him particular atten-

tion, hurried out of the room. In the hall he stood for several moments irresolute. Then he put on his overcoat and hat, and went out into the street.

"I may as well face it out first as last," he muttered to himself; and he turned his face towards Pendormic, and hurried away with rapid strides.

He knew every step of the road, and though it had grown quite dark, he did not slacken his pace for a moment.

"I could walk it blindfold," he said to himself. "Places don't change; it's people who change."

Within half an hour he stood before the door of Pendormic Hall.

"Is the master at home?" he asked of the old servant who opened it.

"Yes; but I don't think he will see anyone this evening."

"He will see me," Abram answered doggedly. "Tell him a man from Australia wants to see him."

"You come from Australia, do you?"

"I do. Now open the door wider, and let me come in."

"I should like your name, if you don't mind."

"Never mind my name; he'll find it out soon enough!"

For a moment the servant hesitated, then ushered Abram into the library, where he sank into the chair that six months before Dan Spear had occupied, and waited the appearance of Peter Trefusa with fast-beating heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MORNING'S ADVENTURE.

“The bravest are the tenderest ;
The loving are the daring.”

BAYARD TAYLOR.

ABRAM had not left the King's Arms many minutes, when Ned returned, having taken a long walk over the cliffs and got benighted on his way home. He was not altogether pleased to find that he would have to spend his evening alone. He [thought his father might, at least, have had compassion on his loneliness and spent his first evening in England with him. It was his nature, however, to make the best of his circumstances, so he settled himself comfortably in front of the fire and gave himself up to reflection. He had so much to be thankful for, that he could not be unhappy if he tried. His first experience of England, it was true, was not exactly exhilarating. The bit of country he had travelled through from Plymouth was pretty enough. The little town of St. Aubyn had its picturesque side. The cliffs along which he had wandered in the twilight were magnificent. The music of the Atlantic rollers was too fine to be put into words.

But, on the other hand, he was oppressed with a sense of loneliness. He knew no one ; he had seen no one—in the village at least—he would care to know. He was a stranger

in a strange land ; there was an air of unfamiliarity over everything.

The one pleasant experience of the day was the journey from Plymouth. The face of Mona Trefusa still haunted him ; her sweet eyes looked at him out of the fire ; the accents of her voice still lingered in his ear.

“ I wonder who she is ? ”

The question was a constantly recurring one. One reflection led to another.

“ I am sure she is good,” he said to himself. “ A girl with a face like that could never be mean or cruel. I wonder if Edie knows her ? Perhaps I shall get to know her through him.”

He put another lump of coal on the fire, and then settled himself back once more in his easy-chair.

“ If I ever fall in love, I am sure it will be with someone like—like—I wonder who she is, though ? ” and he blushed slightly and began to toy with his watch-chain.

For half an hour longer he sat staring into the fire, wondering alternately whom his father had gone to see, and who was the sweet-eyed maiden with whom he had travelled from Plymouth.

“ If father has got yarning with his old acquaintances,” he said to himself at length, “ there is no knowing what time he will be back ; so I had better get off to bed.”

Half an hour later he was fast asleep ; nor did he wake till the light of the spring morning flooded his room. For a moment or two he could not remember where he was. Then suddenly the events of the previous day rushed in upon his brain, and he sprang quickly out of bed.

“ I shall have time for my canter before breakfast,” he said to himself with a smile. “ It will be like old times to feel myself astride a horse once more.” At the foot of the stairs he met the landlord. “ Tell my father when he

comes down that I am gone for a ride," he said; "I will be back again in less than an hour."

"Iss, sir, I'll tell un; but would 'ee like, now, anything special for breakfast when you come back?"

"I'll leave that for father and you to arrange," he answered with a laugh. "By-the-by, what time did he get back last night?"

"Well, sir, I caan't justly say. But it was getting pretty late. He do seem to know middlin' of folks 'bout here."

"Yes; I think he knows a few;" and Ned hurried away to the stables.

A few minutes later he was cantering along the highroad in the direction of the Porth. The air was crisp and cool, with a delicious flavour of the sea in it. In the trees and hedges the birds were singing lustily, and over all the green-
ing landscape could be traced the footsteps of the spring. Ned felt his spirits rising every minute. The morning air, the warm sunshine, the great sweep of undulating country, seemed to intoxicate him. At length he came in sight of the great ocean, flecked in the near distance with the white sails of fishing boats returning home with their spoils.

"Oh, this is fine!" he said, reining up his horse for a moment; "Australia has nothing to equal this. I think I shall like St. Aubyn when I get used to it. I wonder if Edie comes out for morning rides?"

The next moment his horse had broken into a gallop, and the wind hummed in his ears like harp-strings, as he went flying along the level road.

Half an hour out from St. Aubyn he turned his horse's head, and came back at a brisk canter. At Four Lane Ends he pulled up suddenly, while a horse and rider went dashing past at a furious gallop. He saw in a moment what had happened. The brute had got the bit between its teeth,

and the rider, a lady, had lost all control of it. Ned turned his horse's head and dashed after them. Fortunately, the road was fairly straight, and he was able to keep the rider well in sight. She kept her seat well, and was doing her best to guide the brute, though without avail.

"She's plucky, anyhow," Ned said to himself; "her only safety lies in keeping to her saddle. It's to be hoped there are no sharp turns in the road." Meanwhile he kept urging his own horse forward at its utmost speed. He had no hope of stopping the runaway beast; he knew what horses were when they took fright, and was quite certain that this one would dash forward in a mad gallop till some obstacle suddenly checked its progress or it dropped on the road from exhaustion. In either case there would be little chance for the rider; his one hope lay in the possibility of overtaking the runaway. If he could gallop up on the far side, there was just a chance that he might be able to throw his left arm round the rider and lift her out of the saddle on to his own horse. He knew the chance was a very remote one. It seemed very doubtful if she would be able to keep her seat much longer; the maddened beast was already swaying from side to side in its headlong gallop, and the rider was clinging desperately to the pommels of the saddle.

Ned felt his blood rushing through his veins like liquid fire. Such an adventure called into play all the latent chivalry and heroism of his nature. He did not know who the distressed lady was—did not know whether she was old or young, beautiful or plain. It was sufficient for him that she was in imminent peril, and even at the risk of his own neck he was prepared to make an attempt to save her.

Fortunately, his own horse was the larger and swifter of the two. Moreover, it seemed to feel the excitement of the moment, and to understand what was expected of it.

Ned had no occasion to use whip or spur. Leaning forward in his saddle, he spoke every now and then an encouraging word, and the noble beast sprang forward at the speed of the wind.

On! on! still on! and every moment he saw to his joy that they were gaining upon the runaway.

"Hold fast!" Ned shouted at the top of his voice, "and I'll save you yet." And at the sound of his voice he noticed that she seemed to grip the saddle more vigorously; but she did not dare to turn her head—it was almost more than she could do to keep her seat.

As Ned got steadily nearer, he could not help wondering who she was. The shape of her head and neck somehow reminded him of the beautiful girl he had travelled with from Plymouth the day before. Oh, if it were she, and he was permitted to save her life, what a joy and a triumph it would be!

"Faster! *faster!*" he whispered to his horse, but the brave beast was already doing its best.

Now the road took a slight turn, and for a moment the lady was hidden from view; then a further length of the highway came into sight, and suddenly his heart seemed to leap into his mouth. Less than half a mile away was a lumbering quarry team, with a heavy load of stone travelling slowly forward.

"They cannot pass it!" he muttered to himself; "the mad brute will not try: it will simply dash into the waggon—and then death to both!"

With desperate energy he stuck spurs into his foaming horse.

"It's neck or nothing!" he gasped. "By Heaven! I believe it's she!" and the excited beast sprang forward at redoubled speed. For the next few moments it was a literal race for life. "Keep your heart up!" he called.

"I'll be with you in a minute." And truly in another minute he was by her side.

Had the horse he rode been human, it could not have more clearly defined his intention. Neck to neck it kept with the runaway, while Ned stooped over and threw his left arm round the slender waist of the rider.

"Kick the stirrups loose," he whispered excitedly, "and trust yourself to me."

And the next moment he had lifted her clean off her horse, and seated her in front of his own saddle.

"Woa, darling," he whispered to the beast he strode, and she slackened her pace immediately. Then, turning to the lady, he said hurriedly, "Shut your eyes and turn your face toward me." She obeyed instantly, and not a moment too soon, for the maddened brute she had been riding dashed straight into the heavy stone-laden waggon with a shock that was horrible to witness, and the next moment fell back a mangled, bleeding mass.

Ned almost grew sick at the sight, but as soon as possible he turned his own horse round, and began to retrace his steps. He had no time to look after the mangled beast, for the lady in his arms claimed all his attention. The long tension over, she was ready to faint, and it was only by a desperate effort that she retained consciousness.

"Don't give way if you can help it," he whispered. "You'll be better directly."

And for answer she nestled her face closer to him and began to cry.

Ned turned his head a little on one side that he might get a good look at her face, and then gave a long sigh.

It was as he had surmised. She was the young lady he had travelled with the day before; and somehow all his nerves thrilled to music, and his heart leaped with a great joy.

"You are better now," he said at length with great tenderness.

And she lifted her sweet blue eyes to his and smiled.

"I am very sorry you have not a more comfortable seat," he went on, "but it is the best I can offer you."

"Please don't," she said deprecatingly. "How can I ever thank you?"

"Don't try," he said with an uncomfortable lump in his throat. "I was just fortunate in having the swifter horse of the two."

"Could the horse have saved me if you had not been on it?" she asked, and she shuddered and closed her eyes.

"Oh, well, we will say I have a long arm and a strong one," he answered gaily. "But what caused your horse to run away?"

"I really don't know," she answered, shuddering again. "I think something by the roadside must have frightened him. He just caught the bit between his teeth and bolted, and I had no time to look back and see what it was."

"He will not bolt again, at any rate," Ned answered grimly; and then silence dropped down between them.

Both were the subjects of sensations the like of which they had never experienced before. Ned was thrilling with a delicious ecstasy to his finger-tips. Cases of love at first sight are no doubt rare, but they do occur now and then, and Ned's was one of them. From the first moment of seeing Mona in the railway-carriage at Plymouth, she had held him as with a spell. He thought he had never seen a face so fair, or listened to a voice so full of music.

Like other young men, he had had his dreams of love, and now and then had conjured up mental pictures of an ideal woman. But Mona's face outdistanced all his dreams. She was fairer than fancy ever pictured. He did not trouble himself about the future. He was a bit of a fatalist in his

creed, and it was sufficient for him that within twenty-four hours of their first meeting he held her in his arms and felt the pressure of her sunny head against his breast.

Mona, in spite of the shock to her nerves and the loss of her horse, was quietly happy. Every now and then she cast furtive glances up at Ned's strong, resolute face; and she liked it better every time she looked. The joy of being saved was not at all lessened by the fact that her saviour was so strong and handsome.

By the time they reached Four Lane Ends, Mona was quite recovered, and insisted on getting off and walking home alone.

Ned protested, but she was firm.

"My home is only just across there," she said, pointing with her gloved hand. "I can reach it in a few minutes."

"That house among the trees?" Ned questioned.

"Yes, I am Mona Trefusa. I hope you will call. I know mother will want to thank you."

"And my name is Edward Fowey," Ned answered, forgetting all about his father's caution on the previous night. "I will call this afternoon. I do not want any thanks, but—well, I would like to call."

"We shall not be altogether strangers," Mona answered prettily, giving a wider meaning to her words than he understood.

"No," he said in his free Australian fashion. "We can never be strangers after to-day."

"I fancy he knows the secret," she said to herself, then aloud, "I hope you will come to see us often."

"As often as you will let me," he answered, and he looked down into her clear blue eyes with a glance that sent the warm blood in a torrent to her neck and face.

He was standing by her side, with the bridle over his arm. He wanted to say more—to ask after Edie, to tell her

then and there that he loved her—but he suddenly remembered his father's caution.

“ We shall meet again,” he said, taking the hand she held out to him.

“ Yes, often,” she answered with a smile.

In a moment he raised her hand to his lips; then he sprang suddenly upon his horse and trotted away.

So began the course of love. How would it end?

BOOK IV.

VICTORY.

“Life’s just the stuff
To try the soul’s strength on, educe the man.”

BROWNING.

CHAPTER I.

“OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE.”

“Fortune! There is no fortune; all is trial, or punishment, or recompense, or foresight.”—VOLTAIRE.

WHEN Edward Trefusa said good-bye to Dorothy and wandered slowly and dejectedly towards the station, he cared very little what became of him. Life seemed to have nothing left that was worth living for. The discovery that Dorothy was lost to him was the last straw—the final stroke of a cruel and relentless fate. If Dorothy had been free, he would have faced “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” without a moan, and accounted no discipline too painful if thereby he might be made more worthy of the woman he loved; but since she was lost to him, life had no further interest or hope. To face an unkindly world for the mere misery of existence did not seem worth doing. And yet he knew that life would have to be faced. He was not

so cowardly as to dream of ending it by his own act. He would have to fight and endure till God should slip the anchor, and that that time might come quickly he most devoutly prayed.

He remembered nothing afterwards of his walk to Penzugla. Whether he met anyone or passed anyone he had not the remotest idea. The only thing that stood out clearly in his mind was that a vague idea grew into a definite resolve, and that when he reached the station he went at once to the counter and asked for a ticket to Paddington.

A few minutes later the heavy broad-gauge train came lumbering in, and, taking his seat in an empty third-class compartment, he was whirled swiftly away through the night.

Whether or not he had done the wisest thing in deciding to lose himself in London he did not know, and he did not very much care. Had he been in possession of more cash, he would probably have taken ship to Australia and commenced a search for Abram and Ned; but since that course was closed to him, London seemed as likely a place as any other—likelier than most. He could lose himself more quickly there than anywhere else, and just at present that was the only thing he cared to do.

He was hungry, cold and stiff when he reached Paddington in the gray of the morning. The great city was scarcely awake. Thin lines of blue smoke were rising from a myriad chimneys, telling of fires just lighted. Servant maids, looking half asleep, were scouring doorsteps or polishing plates or bell-pulls. The streets were silent and mostly deserted. Here and there were a few people rushing to catch an early train to the West, and now and then a newspaper van lumbered by. But the general appearance of the streets betokened the fact that London was not awake. In

another hour or so the great hive would have swarmed again. Till then it was possible to walk through the streets in quietness and peace.

Edward had not the remotest idea what he intended to do. During his long and sleepless journey from Cornwall he had tried to formulate some plan of action; but no sooner did an idea occur to him than he dismissed it as impracticable.

In fact, he knew of nothing that he could do. He had not been trained to work. The idea of earning his own living had never crossed his mind till within the last day or two. As far as the practical business of life was concerned, he was more helpless than the shoeless urchins of the street.

"I suppose I shall manage to get along while my money lasts," he said to himself; "and when that is done—well, then the deluge;" and he laughed bitterly.

He knew London fairly well, for during his Oxford days he came up frequently. Alas! what a contrast between those days and now! It had seemed a finely heroic thing twenty-four hours ago to give up Pendormic, and to start out with empty hands and an empty pocket to fight the world alone; but in the chill gray of this October morning he saw only its prosaic side, and he began to wonder if he had not been a fool in taking Dan Spear's story for granted and making no attempt to prove its truth or falsehood.

It was a long drive to a little hotel between the Strand and the Embankment. He had stayed there with a young fellow he knew at Oxford, and he remembered it as being clean and not expensive.

After a wash and a substantial breakfast he felt better. Hunger is never conducive to optimism. He rested awhile and read the morning papers before venturing into the streets, and his spirits rose as he did so. Life was not a

bad thing, after all. There are worse forms of enjoyment than lounging in the reading-room of a London hotel.

At length he donned his hat and overcoat and sauntered up into the Strand. The great hive of London had swarmed by this time. The side-walks were black with human bees. The street was a moving mass of vehicles.

Fresh as he was from the country and the quiet lanes and fields, this brilliant and ever-shifting kaleidoscope, as he looked westward, almost bewildered him. The sight of so many people was appalling. If he had to compete with all these, what chance was there for him? and who would notice him in this great restless tide of human life?

He strolled listlessly toward Trafalgar Square. He had nothing to do—no object in view. He would have to spend the day somewhere, and one place was much the same as another in his present mood. He was waiting on the chapter of accidents; perhaps something would turn up. In his life hitherto it was generally the unexpected that had happened. Perhaps it would be so again. For a day or two, at least, he would simply have to keep his eyes and ears open and wait.

He sauntered across the Square to the steps of the National Gallery, and then stood still and looked around him.

The mellow October sunshine was flooding the great open space and imparting a sense of warmth to the busy scene, and what a scene it was! What life and colour and movement! He wondered if there was another place on earth that could compare with it. He did not know how long he remained there watching the ever-shifting panorama. Time was of no value to him, and supposing Dame Fortune was on the look-out for him, she could as easily find him there as anywhere else.

He noticed that he was not the only one who had nothing to do. There were several other members of the leisured class squatted about in the neighbourhood of the fountain. Very likely they were also waiting for a visit from Dame Fortune, and the majority of them appeared to have waited a long time. With scarcely an exception, they were seedy and unkempt and down at the heels. Some of them looked as if they had been out all night. He wondered if he would ever drift into the eddies and backwaters as these men had done—if he would ever float as scum upon the surface.

He walked across the street at length, and climbed on to an omnibus. It was not pleasant to think of becoming an outcast. Moreover, what was there to hinder him from succeeding as other men had done? And yet, was it not a fact that better men than he had failed?

He forgot his gloomy thoughts as he bowled eastward on the top of the bus. There was something exhilarating in the sight of so many people. The life and swing and movement quickened his pulse, and the fresh breeze brought the colour to his cheeks.

"For the man who is succeeding in life," he reflected, "there is no place like London; but for the man who is a failure it is the bottomless pit."

He got off at the Bank and crossed, at infinite risk to life and limb, to the steps of the Mansion House. Here he paused again, and tried to grasp the significance of the surging tide of human life that ebbed and flowed before him. But the sight failed to exhilarate him now. The fear of failure was upon him once more. He was but a unit—lost and swallowed up in the great crowd. If he threw himself into the street and let the horses' hoofs trample upon him and the wheels pass over him, what would it matter? Who would care? There would be a momentary

pause in the traffic, and then the great river of life would roll on as before, and he would be forgotten.

For many days and weeks he tramped the streets aimlessly and uselessly. No man was ever more anxious to earn an honest living, and yet, perhaps, no man ever felt himself more helpless or in the way. He applied for a hundred situations—not that he had any hope of being taken on, but it helped to fill up the time which hung heavy on his hands. Once he witnessed an accident, and, having nothing else to do, he sent an account of it to an evening paper, for which he got five shillings. For the rest of that day he was in an ecstasy. He fancied that at last he was on the highroad to fortune, and was prodigal enough to indulge in a dinner of mutton chops.

For the next week or two he kept a sharp look-out for accidents. But fickle Fortune would not oblige him. There were accidents enough in London, but they did not come his way. People were so wrapped up in themselves that they refused to get knocked down or run over just to accommodate him.

He celebrated Christmas Day by fasting instead of feasting, and the weather being bitterly cold, he remained in bed to save fire.

His lodgings were the cheapest he could get, which fact implied several things. But, as he said to himself, he could not afford to be squeamish, and it is wonderful how, with patience and perseverance, people can get used to things.

By the end of January his little stock of money was almost exhausted, and he seriously contemplated the advisability of pawning some of his clothes. His wardrobe, for a young man, was unusually well stocked, and, however poverty-stricken his lodgings might be, out of doors he looked the gentleman. He was certainly thinner

and paler than when he came up from Cornwall, but that did not detract from his personal appearance. He was a noticeable figure anywhere.

Fortunately, February, as is sometimes the case, was a mild and spring-like month. In the parks and squares there was a "feel" of the open country. The turf and trees seemed to smell of the moors and heather. The voice of the wind brought memories of the fields and woods, and the roar of traffic outside sounded like the murmur of the Cornish sea.

"I'll get away into the country," he said to himself, "while I have the chance. Perhaps in some small town or village I may find something to do. London evidently does not want me." And he went back to his lodgings, and began to get his belongings together.

In the middle of packing one of his bags he paused, irresolute.

"There's something very fascinating about London," he muttered, "even to a man who is a failure. I'll stay another day, at any rate."

And, putting on his hat, he strolled into Fleet Street. For awhile he permitted himself to be jostled by the crowd; then he turned off into the quiet precincts of the Temple Church, and ultimately found himself on the Embankment.

"I must be a poor kind of a man to suffer defeat in this way," he muttered to himself, with clenched hands. "It is simply humiliating that in a great city where there is so much to be done I can get nothing to do. Is the fault in me, I wonder, or is it in the general social order?"

And he thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked out upon the great river flowing swiftly seawards. The sun was sinking behind the warehouses on the farther side of the river. In the distance the spires of Westminster were touched with gold.

Below him, on the steps leading to one of the piers, stood a woman, motionless as a statue, and with her eyes fixed intently on the eddying torrent. By her figure he judged her to be young. She was well, though plainly, dressed in black.

For several minutes he watched her, and then passed on. But he could not help turning round to look at her again. There seemed something uncanny in her perfect stillness.

"She might be dead," he muttered, "only dead people don't stand erect. I wonder why she doesn't move. Perhaps she is meditating suicide."

The next moment she turned her head a little, and, under the shadow of her broad-brimmed hat, he caught just a glimpse of her face. It was only the profile of her mouth and chin he saw, but it set his heart throbbing in a moment. It made him think of Dorothy. And for a moment he was back again among the Cornish hills, with Dorothy by his side.

He had been doing his best to forget her during all the months he had been away. He knew no good could come of brooding over a hopeless love. Possibly she was married by this time, and had almost forgotten that such as he ever existed.

But his love was not dead; not even dormant. She came back to him in his dreams, and often dominated his waking hours, in spite of his resolves to forget her.

He walked forward some distance, and then turned round and began slowly to retrace his steps.

The woman still stood in the same position, watching intently the eddying current. It seemed to fascinate her, to hold her with a spell.

Edward grew more and more interested. Of course it could not be Dorothy. Dorothy was hundreds of miles from London. But he hoped, whoever she might be, that

she did not intend to throw herself into the river. It would be dark soon. The fire had left the spires of Westminster. The farther side of the river rolled deep in shadow.

He got as near to her as he could. His footsteps sounded on the steps behind her. She started, and turned her head quickly. Their eyes met.

"Dorothy!" he gasped.

"Edward!"

And then their hands clasped in a strange, deep silence.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

“Love waits for love, though the sun be set,
And the stars come out, the dews are wet,
And the night-winds moan.”

W. C. SMITH.

EDWARD was the first to recover himself.

“Dorothy,” he exclaimed, “what brings you here?”

“Trouble, Edward;” and she lifted her large liquid eyes to his beseechingly.

“Trouble?” he exclaimed. “But how is it that you are in London at all?”

“I live here. I work in a milliner’s shop off Oxford Street.”

“You are not married, then?”

She smiled pathetically.

“I left St. Aubyn the day after you took your departure,” she replied.

“But why are you here on the river’s brink alone?”

“I always come when I have the opportunity, which, alas! is not often. I like to watch the river flowing seawards.”

“But surely you were not—that is——”

She smiled again, and answered:

“I was only wondering. One cannot help wondering, you know, sometimes.”

"No, I suppose not. But the place——"

"Is quiet," she interposed, "and the great river awakens so many thoughts."

"But you spoke of trouble."

"Yes; the river always seems like a friend to me, and I like to talk to it. I know it will offer me a refuge at last, if everything else fails."

"If everything else fails?"

"Yes. Have you never realized since you have been in London that to sleep beneath the river is not the worst thing that could happen?"

"I do not think——"

"Ah, you are a man!" she broke in; "that makes all the difference. I wonder if life is like the river?"

"In which way?"

"If it will be swallowed up in a great ocean at last, and its identity lost?"

"No, I think not. But let us get away from here. You will not mind going with me?"

"No."

"The A.B.C. shops are pleasant and warm, and over a cup of tea and some warm toast we shall be able to talk without interruption."

"It will be pleasant to talk of old times," she answered pathetically. "I have seen no one I knew since I left Cornwall. I think London is the loneliest place on earth. But perhaps you have found it different. Men can fight the world so much more easily than women can."

He laughed a little bitterly.

"Do I look like a successful man?" he asked.

She turned her head and looked at him for a moment, then answered with a smile, "You do not look like a failure, at any rate."

"That is a consolation," he answered in a tone of voice

she could not quite understand, and she did not like to question him about himself.

For some distance they walked in silence. Then they turned into a large well-lighted room, and were fortunate in finding an unoccupied table in a recess at the far end.

"This will do splendidly," he said. "Now we can talk without interruption, and I am dying to know why you left Cornwall, and what brought you to London."

"You look very much alive for a dying man," she answered with one of her old winsome smiles; then she began deliberately to pull off her gloves.

He watched her with a curious interest lighting up his face. She was thinner and paler than when he saw her last, but not less beautiful. On the contrary, there was a look of patient resignation in her eyes, a suggestion of pain or mournfulness that haunted the lines of her mouth, a tinge of melancholy in her smile that rather enhanced the charm of her face, and set his heart throbbing even more wildly than in the old days.

For the moment he forgot his long struggle, his multiplied disappointments, the pitiful failure to get anything to do. If he had been the most prosperous man in London, he could not have been more supremely happy. Into his soul summer had come again. Dorothy was with him, and her presence was like heaven.

While waiting for her tea to cool, Dorothy told him of her aunt's anger, and of her hurried departure from Cornwall. She kept nothing back, for there was nothing she wished to hide.

He listened with the keenest interest, letting no word escape him. When she had finished there was silence for a few moments.

"And you did not go near your father?" he questioned at length.

"No."

"And he thinks you are still in Cornwall?"

"Oh no; I have written to him since."

"And he approves of your being here?"

"I do not know. I think he would like me at home. But his wife has to be considered."

"You do not get on well with her?"

"She hates me. I do not know why. Perhaps father made too much of me before her."

"And have you heard from your aunt?"

"Not a word. I presume she thinks I am with father. But she does not correspond with him now. She will never forgive him for marrying again."

"I see. So she and the St. Aubyn folks are in blissful ignorance of your whereabouts. But you have not told me yet of your experiences since you left Cornwall."

"They may be summed up in one word," she answered with a pathetic smile.

"And that word?"

"Trouble."

"That is very vague," he said tenderly. "I would like to hear all the story."

"It cannot be put into words," she answered with a far-away look in her eyes. "No one can ever know what girls in shops have to endure, save the girls themselves. Perhaps I have been particularly unfortunate. I have had to serve under women, and though I don't like to say it, it is but the simple truth, they are bitterly cruel to their sex."

"Cruel?"

"Oh yes. Not in any large way that appeals in a moment to the imagination, but in a thousand little ways. They can say things and insinuate things that stab you all over with needle-points until you writhe in absolute torture. And yet there is nothing that you can take hold of, or even

complain about. If anyone knocks you down you can get redress. But what is being knocked down? A single blow and it is over. But women do not rule their subordinates in that way. Their methods of torture are so refined that you cannot describe them. But forgive me, I did not intend to speak in this way."

"Please go on," he said eagerly. "You know I am interested in everything that concerns you."

"It's selfish only to talk about myself," she answered quietly. "Besides, every day is like every other day. Some girls get hardened and don't seem to mind. Perhaps I shall feel less acutely in time."

"But why have you not tried to get another situation?"

She smiled wistfully.

"I am in my third place already," she said, "and I cannot constantly be troubling my old master in the North to give me references."

"But there must be some good places?"

"Yes, but it is hard for an outsider to get into them. The girls who are fortunate enough to get good places keep them."

"And so far you have not been among the fortunate ones?"

"I think I must have been singularly unfortunate. My first situation was in Bristol. The proprietors were two maiden ladies noted for their zeal in the cause of religion and philanthropy. I stayed only a month. I think I should have died had I stayed longer. I found they were constantly changing their hands, and no wonder. They expended so much pity on stray dogs and ill-used rabbits that they had none left for their employés. We shivered at nights under insufficient clothing, and went hungry during the day because we could not eat the food. We toiled from dawn to dark in a stuffy, ill-ventilated room, and were not allowed sufficient

exercise to keep our blood in circulation. But the worst cannot be told : the petty insults and taunts, the cruel wicked insinuations, the constant abuse, the utter absence of a word of praise. Perhaps I am peculiarly sensitive. I do not know. But that month in Bristol nearly broke my heart."

"And where did you go then?"

"I got another situation in Bath."

"Well?"

"It was just a little worse than the other one, that's all."

"And did you stay long?"

"Six weeks ; during which time I resolved I would never again serve under a woman."

"You are surely hard on your sex?"

"Perhaps so. My sex has been hard on me. I am beginning to think that women have no pity for women. They will tolerate anything in men. But for their sisters—especially if they are in a position of authority over them—they have no sympathy."

"And how have you fared since you came to London?"

"Very much better. My master has been kind and considerate—and yet——" Then she paused suddenly.

"Yet what?" he asked.

"I cannot stay," she answered with downcast eyes.

"But if your employer is kind?" he questioned.

"Do not press me for an answer," she replied, a hot blush spreading itself over her face. "There are some things that cannot be put into words."

He defined the truth in a moment, and his hands clenched like a vice. The summer went out of his soul as suddenly as it came. The humiliation of his failure came back to him intensified a hundredfold.

Here was he, a man, unable to offer protection to the woman he loved—unable to help her in any way ; less able, indeed, than she to fight the world alone. He drew a

paper that was on the table near him, and bent over it to hide the burning blushes that swept over his face.

His vision cleared after a few moments, and his eye lighted on an advertisement :

“Wanted, an Amanuensis—Apply in writing, stating age, etc.”

He took out his note-book and copied it, then slowly returned it to his pocket.

Dorothy watched him closely.

“Are you doing well in London?” she asked after a pause.

“Not very well, Dorothy,” he answered with a little start.

“But I shall do better now that I have found you.”

“I am afraid my being here will not help you,” she answered slowly.

“Yes, it will. Do you remember the last time we met, and what I said to you then?”

“I am not likely to forget,” she answered, looking past him into the distance.

“I should have done better in this great city if I had had any hope of winning you to cheer me on,” he answered impulsively. “Oh, Dorothy, can you give me such a hope now?”

“Have you not ceased to care for me during this long separation?” she asked, with her eyes still away in the distance.

“Ceased to care for you? Oh, Dorothy! I love you more passionately to-day than ever I did.”

“And I have never cared for anyone but you,” she said, lifting her glorious eyes to his.

For the next moment or two he came very near forgetting himself. It was a cruel position to be in. A public tea-room is not an ideal place for love-making. He literally ached to take Dorothy in his arms and kiss her, and if the

truth must be told, Dorothy rather enjoyed his discomfiture.

"Oh! this roomful of people is simply absurd," he muttered at length.

"You called it splendid when we came in," she said, with a little ripple of laughter.

"Oh, but circumstances alter cases," he answered, with a frown.

"You should not look at me in that way," she said, darting a mischievous glance at him. "People will think we have quarrelled."

"It doesn't matter what people think," he replied, with a broad smile, "so long as we understand each other."

"Doesn't it?"

"Not a bit. Now, shall we get out of this place?"

"If you wish."

"I do wish. I want to be on the Embankment again. It will be quiet there."

Time sped like a dream as they wandered slowly arm-in-arm by the side of the great river. They had so much to relate, so many plans to make, so many hopes to share.

Edward's past disappointments were as nothing to him now, and Dorothy forgot her troubles. She had another friend now in addition to Father Thames. Edward was near—her lover and her knight. She would always find a refuge within the shelter of his arms. With him by her side, she could face the world.

Of course they would be always poor; they made up their minds to that. But love would sweeten poverty, and life would be all the better for fighting its battle side by side; and if they had to live in a cottage always, what did it matter? They would be together; and in that, life's true blessedness would be found.

So they dreamed. And it was well for them they did;

it gave them hope and courage; it took the sting out of disappointment, and set a rainbow in the clouds.

"Oh, Edward!" Dorothy said, looking up earnestly into his face, "I don't think London will ever seem lonely again."

"I hope not, darling."

"And we shall always have Sunday to look forward to."

"I can hardly realize it yet, sweetheart," he said, looking fondly down into her eyes. "I shall never cease to bless that parson who played eaves-dropper."

"Things have happened very strangely," she murmured.

"In my life, it is always the unexpected that happens," he said.

"You have had your disappointments, Edward."

"And my compensations, Dorothy. I should not have gained you had I not lost Pendormic."

"It is a poor exchange."

"Not from my point of view. You are worth a thousand Pendormics."

"Ah, you say so now."

"I shall always say so," he answered impulsively, "and it will be my one ambition now to make myself worthy of you. Oh! I am going to make a home for you that you will be proud of."

"We will work together for it."

And for answer he bent down and kissed her. Nobody was near, and he could not resist the temptation.

When he left her a little later at the door of the millinery establishment in which she worked, he felt as though he trod on air. The dark and grimy city seemed glorified. He elbowed his way through the crowds with light heart and buoyant step. A new hope possessed him—a new courage had been born in his heart.

"I've only half tried hitherto," he said to himself. "I'm going to begin in earnest now."

CHAPTER III.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

“Time the shuttle drives, but you
Give to every thread its hue,
And elect your destiny.”

BURLEIGH.

ON the following morning Edward donned the best suit of clothes he had, and made his way to a quiet street in Bloomsbury. He was not feeling nearly as hopeful as on the previous night; the raw, chilly morning was not conducive to buoyancy of spirits, nor did the errand on which he was bent offer much promise of success. Nevertheless, he felt that nothing was to be gained without effort, and he was resolved, as much for Dorothy's sake as his own, never to say “fail” while any life was left in him.

Pulling the door-bell of a well-kept house, he waited with great sinking of heart for it to open. “Very likely I shall be censured for my impertinence,” he reflected, “for the advertisement distinctly stated that application was to be made by letter. However, ‘nothing venture, nothing win,’ and here comes somebody to open the door.”

“Is Mr. Walden at home?” he asked of the maid who stood before him.

“Yes, sir; but he is engaged.”

"I would like to see him particularly, if that is possible."

"He may see you, sir. Shall I take in your card?" and the girl smiled good-naturedly. She was evidently taken with his appearance.

Edward hesitated for a moment. All his cards bore the name "Edward Trefusa," with the word "Pendormic" in the bottom left-hand corner. But since he had been in London he had dropped the name Trefusa, and for some reason or other he had not cared to take the name Fowey. His landlady always called him Mr. Edwards, and he had let it remain at that.

He thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out his card-case. "It will make no difference," he reflected; then aloud, "If you will be so kind," and he handed his card to the maid.

She was back again in a few moments. "The master says he'll see you, sir;" and without a word he followed her into a large room at the back of the house.

He had just time to notice that all the walls were covered with books, and then his attention was arrested by the owner of the library.

He was seated at a writing-table in the centre of the room, but he rose at once and bowed in a most courtly way. He was a gentleman considerably past middle life, with a bald head, clean-shaven lips and chin, and whiskers all round his face after the fashion of forty years ago. His forehead was high and dome-shaped, his eyes mild and rather pale, his lips full, his chin somewhat retreating. The first impression he conveyed was rather of a philanthropist than of a philosopher. But first impressions are often misleading. Mr. Walden was, and is, one of the foremost thinkers of the age.

Notwithstanding Mr. Walden's mild and courtly ways,

Edward felt his courage oozing out at the tips of his fingers. "If I don't plunge into this business straight off, I shall make a fool of myself," he said to himself.

Mr. Walden came to his rescue.

"You called on business, I presume?" he said slowly and quietly.

"I did. The truth is, I saw your advertisement, and I came straight here. I knew it was of no use writing, for reasons which I will presently explain, if you will permit me. I imagined if I could see you—put my case before you—you might give me a chance."

"I am sorry——" Mr. Walden began.

"Please do not dismiss me hastily," Edward pleaded. "If you knew the difficulty a young man has in getting a start, I am sure you would not begrudge me a few moments of your time. Let me tell you something about myself—let me enlist your sympathy, if possible. You see, I am without experience, without testimonials, without friends, without influence; and unless someone gives me a start, how am I ever to earn a living? I am sure I could give you satisfaction: let me come a week, a fortnight, for nothing. I will not ask for wages, unless I can do what you want and do it to your satisfaction. Believe me, I am not an adventurer or a spendthrift. By a freak of Fortune I have been thrown friendless on this great city to earn my living as best I can. For more than four months I have been striving in vain. My purse is getting sadly light, and very soon absolute want will stare me in the face. I will be your slave, if you will only let me serve you."

Mr. Walden was evidently touched, not simply by his words, but more particularly by his manner and appearance.

"It is most unusual," he said, "to consider an application of the kind you make—most unusual. Moreover, it is

not without risk, though I will say this—your appearance impresses me very favourably.”

“But will you let me prove my worth by my work,” Edward pleaded. “From my point of view I can see no risk. If I do not do your work satisfactorily you will not be called upon to pay me. I only ask that you will give me a trial.”

“You are free, of course, to begin at once?”

“This very moment, if you like.”

“Sit down in this chair and write as I dictate.”

Edward obeyed instantly.

Mr. Walden evidently forgot himself, for, dropping into his chair, he closed his eyes, brought the tips of his fingers together, and began to talk in a slow, solemn, monotonous way, and kept it up for at least a quarter of an hour. He paused suddenly with a start and opened his eyes.

“Will you kindly pass the sheets here?” he said, in the same low tone of voice. He read as he spoke, slowly and carefully. “You are an excellent penman,” he said at length, “but you write too legibly.”

“Too legibly?”

“Yes; the printers are a great bother. When anything is very plainly written they give it to the youngest apprentice, and there is no end of trouble with the proof. I find that badly written copy generally comes out best.”

“I have had no experience of compositors,” Edward remarked. “But I shall be glad to oblige you, even by writing badly.”

“Then you think you could write badly?”

“Oh yes, and without any trouble.”

“You know something about books, I presume?”

“A little.”

“Do you know *Latin*?”

“Yes.”

"Greek?"

"Slightly."

"French?"

"Sufficient to make myself understood."

"German?"

"Moderately well."

"Let me test you;" and Mr. Walden pushed back his chair and began.

Edward felt terribly nervous, but he braced himself for the ordeal.

At the end of half an hour Mr. Walden's grave face relaxed into a smile.

"With your attainments," he said, "you ought to be able to earn infinitely more than I can give you."

"So far my attainments have earned me five shillings," was the reply.

Mr. Walden picked up Edward's card that was lying on the table, and looked at it again.

"Your name is not a very common one," he remarked, as if thinking aloud.

"It is common enough in Cornwall, sir."

"Oh, indeed! Yes, of course—Tre, Pol, and Pen. I remember now. Yes, yes. Well, Mr. Trefusa, though I am acting somewhat against my principles, shall I say? not against my judgment, I will engage you, say for a week on trial; and now, as you are here and I am very busy, why, suppose we begin at once. What do you say?"

"I shall be delighted to do so, sir."

Once more Mr. Walden settled himself in his chair, closed his eyes, brought the tips of his fingers together, and began to talk—slowly, monotonously, and with long pauses every few minutes. Occasionally Edward helped him out with a word, or found a synonym for him, or suggested an alteration in the turn of a phrase; and always with such a clear

appreciation of his employer's thought and meaning, that long before the day was out Mr. Walden was delighted, and inwardly congratulated himself on the acquisition of a real treasure.

When Edward met Dorothy for a few minutes that evening, he was in the best of spirits.

"Oh, Dorothy," he explained, "you have turned the tide for me. I have got a situation at last."

"A situation at last?" she questioned, with sympathetic eyes; "have you not had a situation all along?"

"No, Dorothy; and yesterday I had not the courage to tell you. For four months I have been striving and failing. But your presence, darling, and your love have put new life into me. I shall never look back any more."

"Oh yes, you will often look back," she said with a smile. "Some day your struggle in this great city will seem like a romance to you, and you will often recall it and talk about it."

"And your own struggle, darling?" he questioned.

"I shall not mind that now. Nothing seems hard now you are near me. This day has flown by like a happy dream."

They had turned into one of the quiet squares out of the noise and rush, and were walking round arm-in-arm. Overhead the stars were burning brightly, and in the air they felt, rather than heard, the throb of the mighty city.

"Oh, Dorothy," he said, "I never imagined I could be as happy as I am."

She pressed her hand more tightly on his arm, but did not reply. She could not tell all that was in her heart. She was tasting a rapture such as she never expected to feel, and was half afraid lest some moment she would wake up and find that it was all a dream.

For awhile they walked on in silence. Then he turned

suddenly, and said: "Dorothy, I have thought of something to-day that I would like you to do."

"Like me to do, Edward?"

"Yes. Perhaps at first you will laugh at the idea. But I should like you to try, all the same."

"What is it?" she asked, looking up eagerly into his face.

"I should like you to write an article on the life of a shop-girl, and send it to one of the papers."

"Oh, Edward, what an idea!"

"Why not?" he asked. "The life of shop-assistants, of dressmakers and milliners, has been described from the outside, I have no doubt, again and again. But you can describe it from the inside. You told me yesterday that none but shop-girls can ever know what shop-girls have to endure. Then, darling, you ought to do your best to enlighten the public."

"But, Edward, I never wrote an article in my life. I should not know how to begin. And if I could begin, I should stick fast at the end of the first sentence."

"No, you wouldn't," he said impulsively. "It would not be like writing from hearsay. It would be a page out of your own experience. What you have seen and felt you will be able to shape into words without difficulty."

"No, Edward; you over-estimate my gifts. There is so much style in all that those newspaper people write."

"Too much style by half," he laughed; "more style than anything else frequently. My eyes have been opened to-day. Mr. Walden prints what he 'talks,' using the simplest words, and practically ignoring what is called style. And yet I can see clearly enough that that is the great charm of his writing. It is the very absence of what people imagine to be style that makes his style so perfect."

"Ah! but he has had long practice. He knows exactly

how to shape his thoughts in the right way. Very likely he has reached that very simplicity through infinite labour and pains."

"It may be so, Dorothy. Still, there can be no harm in your trying. Just write as though nobody would ever see it but yourself; tell your story without effort—just a simple, straightforward narrative."

"Do you really mean it, Edward?"

"I am in sober earnest, darling. I have thought about it a good deal to-day."

"But I have no time," she pleaded.

"I know you have not much, sweetheart. Oh, I wish I were well enough off to make a home for you now!"

"We must not be impatient," she said shyly, lifting her beautiful eyes to his.

"I hope I shall not begin to regret the loss of Pendormic now that I have found you," he said, after a pause. "For myself I do not care. But to make you a queen, darling; to lift you above want and care; to give you a beautiful home; to surround you with beautiful things—oh, darling, if I could do that I should be a happier man even than I am now!"

"I am glad you are not the squire," she said.

"But you love beautiful things, Dorothy?"

"Yes; but I should not like any question of position or money to come between us."

"I think I understand you," he said tenderly. "But I should never have doubted you."

"But others might. The world is all too ready to say that girls sell themselves for position."

"Ah, well, sweetheart," he answered, "the world will not trouble about us, and some day—and I hope soon—we will have a little nest of our own."

Ten days later they met in the Park. It was Saturday

afternoon, and Dorothy's half-holiday. March had come in like a lamb. The wind was in the west, and the warm sunshine flooded everything. They had agreed to meet at Hyde Park Corner, and Dorothy was the first to arrive. She had not long to wait. He came toward her with a face radiant with happiness.

"I've good news for you, Dorothy!" he exclaimed. "What do you think?"

"Have you an increase of salary?" she asked.

"Better than that;" and he pulled out of his pocket a copy of the weekly edition of the *Comet*. "Here is your article, Dorothy, and in all the glory of leader type."

"But you surely did not send it?"

"I did, though. And here is a letter for the author of it."

"Oh, Edward!" she exclaimed, tearing the envelope open eagerly. "And look—a cheque—and for two guineas! Oh, Edward——"

"That's good. Now let's see what the editor has to say."

She ran her eye quickly down the page, and then looked wonderingly up into his face.

"Oh, Edward! what does it mean?" she said.

"It evidently means that you've 'struck gold,' as the Australians say," he answered, with beaming face.

"The editor will be glad to receive further contributions from the same pen," she mused, and her eyes wandered away over the wide undulating Park. "It seems too strange to be true; and yet if I could only earn my bread without going back to that work-room——"

"Are you considering if it can be done?" Edward broke in.

"No, not exactly," she replied. "I think I could write another article at least."

"Then I would do it," he said quickly. "Two guineas are not to be despised."

"It seems almost like a Providence," she answered slowly. "For I cannot possibly stay where I am."

For the rest of the afternoon they wandered through the quiet paths, and talked together as lovers will, and weaved all manner of pretty fancies, and planned some grandly heroic things, and were, on the whole, very blissfully happy.

So the days passed away, and Dorothy wrote a second article, and got an interview with the editor, and received a commission to write other articles still, which, of course, necessitated her giving up her situation, which she did without any reluctance, though evidently to the annoyance of her employer.

Edward, meanwhile, had given entire satisfaction to Mr. Walden, and with a regular salary of two pounds a week felt that the world was under his feet, and all his troubles behind him.

So matters went on until the middle of April, when Edward startled Dorothy by suggesting that they should get married.

"It's pitifully lonely in diggings," he said—"at least, I find it so. Moreover, we are paying for two sets of rooms when one would do; and then, you see, if we were together I could help you with your work, and every way, Dorothy, we should be happier together."

"We'd better wait, Edward, till we can furnish a little house of our own," she said, with a blush.

"I don't see that," he replied.

"I am afraid you won't see it, and you know the old adage."

"Yes, I know the old adage," he answered, with a laugh; "but it doesn't apply in the present case."

Dorothy gave her consent a week later, but that was because she was so uncomfortable in her rooms, and good rooms at a reasonable price seemed impossible to get. Moreover, she felt sometimes in her journalistic work that she needed a husband's protection, while he was quite certain that they would fight the world more successfully together than apart.

So in all the hopefulness of youth they fixed the day. They had no old people to advise them or control them. From the point of view of the worldly-wise it seemed a foolish resolve, but to them it appeared an eminently wise and proper thing to do. They imagined, as nearly all young people do, that two could live quite as cheaply as one, and that, instead of increasing their expenditure, they would actually decrease it. And they had nobody to tell them any better.

So the day was fixed. But, all unknown to them, other events were ripening which were destined to affect all their future.

CHAPTER IV.

INTERVIEWS.

"Sort thy heart to patience ;
These few days' wonder will be quickly worn."

SHAKESPEARE.

MEANWHILE St. Aubyn was shaken as with an earthquake. Abram's attempt to hide his identity for a few days was nipped in the bud. After what David Treloggas told him, the truth was bound to come out, and he started at once, as we have seen, to have an interview with Peter Trefusa.

When the old man heard that a man from Australia was waiting to see him in the library, he hobbled down the stairs in a state of great excitement.

Abram rose from his chair when he entered the room, and looked at him steadily. Thirty years seemed to have passed lightly over Peter's head. He looked older, certainly, but the face was the same—hard, and cold, and unsympathetic.

"You are from Australia, I am told?" he began, in a thin, rasping voice.

"I am."

"Come, likely, in answer to the inquiries I've been instituting?"

"No ; I've come on my own account."

"You have ? Then, what do you want ?"

"I want to see you."

"But who are you?"

"I'm Abram Fowey."

"The devil——" And Peter dropped into the nearest chair as if he had been shot.

"No, I'm not the devil," Abram answered coolly; "I'm simply what I said."

"And you dare show your face to me?"

"I dare show my face to anyone."

"Then I say you're a hardened villain, and worse than you've been painted, and that's bad enough."

"Perhaps so; but people who live in glass houses should not throw stones."

"Please don't add insult to injury, or I'll have you bundled out of the house."

"Easier said than done," Abram answered doggedly. "You bundled me once out of my own house, and stole from me and my father what we had honestly paid for, but I'm older now and not so easily budged."

"Is that what you've come here to say to me?" Peter cried, rising suddenly from his chair, and trembling in every limb with passion.

"It's only a part of it," Abram answered coolly. "I've several things I want to say."

"Can you tell me where my grandson is?" Peter demanded; "that's the only thing I want to hear about. You palmed off upon me your own—your own——" and he dropped into his chair again. Whatever words were upon his tongue, he seemed unable to utter them.

"I sent you your own grandson," Abram said slowly and with emphasis; "and I learn to-night that you have turned him adrift upon the world."

Peter laughed mockingly.

"It's natural, I suppose," he said, "that you should try

to keep up the deception. Your parental heart is pained to find that your own son is not in possession of Pendormic. It's a great blow to you, no doubt. It was a clever move on your part, but hardly clever enough. I wonder you are not afraid of being arrested for fraud."

"You judge me by yourself, I presume," Abram answered quietly; "but I assure you I have no fears on that score."

"Thou art a most hardened villain, at any rate," said Peter, recovering somewhat his self-possession; "but hast thou brought the other lad with thee?"

"My own son is at the King's Arms."

"Thy own son! Thou—thou——"

"You had better keep your abuse to yourself," Abram interposed. "What I tell you now is the sober truth."

"Oh, you infernal liar!" Peter gasped, growing very pale again.

"You will not believe me?" Abram questioned, leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece and looking very cool and defiant.

"Believe thee? I'd sooner believe the devil himself. A man who can plot and lie as thou hast done is beyond belief."

"Then, what do you propose to do?" Abram questioned.

"I intend to take from thee my own grandson. Oh, thou hast had a revenge! I admit that much! I educated thy own son as though he were a Trefusa. If I had only strength I'd like to kill thee."

"No doubt," said Abram coolly. "People of your stamp are not particular what they do. And if you like to take my son Ned and make him heir of Pendormic, it's possible he won't mind. If you like to make an idiot of yourself, and cheat your own, that's your own look-out, and not mine. I've known for thirty years that you were a rogue, but that you were such an arrant fool is more than I bargained for."

"You—you—Abram Fowey, dare—dare—talk to me in that way," Peter almost screamed.

"Dare?" Abram questioned defiantly. "I wonder who you are that I should tremble before you! I'm afraid of no man living, though if there is any man on earth I hate it is you. And if I had tried to cheat you for cheating me, it would have been no more than you deserve; but I tell you again that the lad I sent you is your own grandson."

Peter sat still and gasped. The man's effrontery was appalling. That he was deliberately lying he had no doubt. It was part of his wicked and long-continued conspiracy, and he was evidently determined to brazen it out to the last.

"You are a cool scoundrel, Abram," Peter said at length, with a great effort to keep cool himself—"a very cool one—but you will not get over me. I'm too old a bird to be caught with chaff. You've reckoned this time without your host. You fancy because you were able to bamboozle a lawyer like Carve that you will be able to come the same game over me; but I am not quite so green;" and he laughed harshly and cynically.

"Then, having turned your own grandson adrift, you are prepared to adopt my son Ned?" Abram asked mockingly.

"The other lad shall come here," said Peter doggedly. "I know thou wilt lie and protest he is thy own son, but I shall soon enable him to prove his identity."

"No doubt about that," said Abram mockingly. "That, from Ned's point of view, is the unfortunate part of it."

"What doest thou mean?" said Peter with a sudden blaze in his eyes.

"I mean that Ned stands a poor chance if you go into the question of proof. You'd better take him without inquiry."

Peter gasped again. Either this man was the most

consummate actor and scoundrel alive, or else he had been an honest man throughout, had resisted temptation manfully and successfully, had refused to be revenged when he had the opportunity ; nay, more, had succoured and befriended the grandson of his greatest enemy.

"No," Peter reflected, "that is impossible. No man living would do it. I wouldn't myself. He's practised his part for so many years that it comes natural to him."

"Fowey," he spoke out at length, "thou'rt playing thy part very well, but it's no use. I own that thou art clever. I'll pay thee that compliment. I'll admit, too, that the temptation was great. But thy game is up. It was a bold thing to come to England and bring the lad with thee—a bold thing to come up here and try to brazen it out with me—but thou'lt see by this it isn't a bit of use. Thou'dst better make a clean breast of it, and have done with it."

Abram stood silent for several moments, but his face betrayed none of the thoughts that were passing through his mind. Peter watched him narrowly, and prepared himself for a full confession.

Abram lifted up his eyes at length and smiled.

"Where does your lawyer live?" he questioned.

"I'm my own lawyer at present," Peter answered. "Whittle is dead, and Carve I dismissed for permitting thee to make such a fool of him."

"Mr. Carve, I presume, does not believe I made a fool of him?"

"Not he; he's too thick-headed for that."

"And does he live in St. Aubyn?"

"No; he lives down at Penzugla. But why go to him? You'd better confess now and have done with it."

Abram cast upon him a look of withering scorn, and remained silent.

Peter got angry again. This man was more than a match

for him, after all. Moreover, his very coolness and self-restraint awoke doubts in his mind. Who could tell what trump card he had up his sleeve, or what further frauds he might perpetrate?

"Thou'lt not own up?" Peter questioned after an awkward pause.

"I've owned up quite sufficiently," Abram answered. "You can meditate now, if you like, on what I've said. Good-evening;" and he walked straight to the door and passed out into the hall.

Peter stared after him with a bewildered expression in his eyes; then he rang the bell violently, and he heard one of the servants come and open the outer door.

"The devil!" he muttered as the door closed again; then he climbed slowly to his own den and bolted the door behind him. For several minutes he paced round and round the small apartment; then he threw himself into his favourite chair before the fire, and stared blankly at the smouldering embers.

"Talk about being between the devil and the deep sea," he muttered at length; "that's nothing to the position I'm in. Good Lord! I've paid dearly for Briar Nook. I've always laughed at parson's clatter about sins finding people out and all that, but by all the saints in Cornwall mine have found me out!" and he shrank further back into his chair and shut his eyes.

"Life ain't worth it," he went on after a pause. "There's no comfort in anything. Who said that about 'With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again?' Blow it, it's sober truth, anyhow. Not a single scheme of mine has miscarried, and yet, curse it! I'm fast as a thief in a mill. Fowey has not done plotting yet. I could see it in his very eyes; and I shall have the devil to pay to find out who's who. Very likely he's gone to Carve, and Carve will

sell his soul to get his revenge on me. But I'll punish both of them yet."

Meanwhile, Abram was making the best of his way to Penzugla.

"I'll see Lawyer Carve before I sleep," he reflected. "Good heavens! I little thought what I was coming to when I landed at Plymouth this morning. Anyhow, after so many years' straight sailing I'm not going to change my course now."

It was quite dark, but he knew every step of the way. Sometimes he almost forgot himself, and fancied he was a boy again. The very sound of the wind in the trees was just as he remembered it forty years ago.

He found Mr. Carve at home and disengaged, and a few minutes later they were closeted in the lawyer's private room. Mr. Carve recognised Abram again in a moment, and his face beamed.

"This is most fortunate," he said, rubbing his hands together and smiling—"most fortunate! We shall be able to go to work now without delay."

"I don't know what you mean," Abram said, with a look of surprise in his eyes.

"You'll know directly," the lawyer said. "Come this way;" and a few minutes later Abram was staring at a pile of papers, and feeling in considerable doubt as to whether he was awake or dreaming.

The interview lasted a long time. Both men had a great deal to say, and many questions to ask, and several points had to be debated over and over again.

Could Peter have seen their faces and listened to their conversation, he would have been more than ever convinced that they were two wicked conspirators bent on driving him to distraction.

It was quite late when Abram reached the King's Arms, and without a word to anyone he went straight to his own room. But he was too excited to sleep. His brain seemed in a whirl. Hour after hour he lay tossing from side to side, and trying his best to banish the events of the day from his mind.

A new day was ready to break before sleep touched his eyelids, and then his slumber was disturbed by painful and distressing dreams.

It was late when he got down to breakfast, and Ned had not yet returned from his ride.

"I'll wait a few minutes, at any rate," Abram said—a few minutes which grew into half an hour, and then he sat down and attacked the ham and eggs alone.

A few minutes later Ned came hurriedly in, looking very warm and excited.

"You're late, my boy," Abram said, looking up with a smile.

"I know it, father, but I've had quite an adventure."

"Indeed!"

"You remember the young lady we travelled with yesterday from Plymouth?"

"Yes; what of her?"

"Well, she was out riding this morning, and her horse took fright and bolted."

"And you stopped it?"

"Not I; I simply bolted after them. It was an exciting chase, I can assure you, but I got alongside just in the nick of time."

"Lifted her out of the saddle, eh?"

"Clean as a glove, and a moment later the blind brute dashed into a heavy waggon laden with large rocks of granite."

"Killed?"

"Oh, I expect so! I did not wait to see."

"Too much taken up with the young lady, eh?"

"Naturally. But guess who she is."

"You've told me that already."

"But not her name."

"That may be. A new generation has come along since I went away."

"Well, she's Miss Trefusa."

"Yes?" and a startled look came into Abram's eyes.

"I expect she will be Edie's cousin. I forgot to ask her. I'm calling later on. But I must go to see Edie first. I'm getting terribly impatient for a grip of his hand."

Abram did not reply for several minutes, and Ned made good use of the silence by demolishing the ham and eggs.

Abram's voice had a peculiar tone in it when he spoke again.

"I've something to say to you after breakfast," he said, without lifting his eyes. "Things have happened that I did not expect."

"Indeed! Nothing unpleasant, I hope?"

"Unpleasant enough. But get done with your breakfast and I will tell you."

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET OUT.

"The ill that's wisely feared is half understood,
And fear of bad is the best foil to good."

QUARLES.

AFTER the table had been cleared and the fire mended, Abram bolted the door. Then he took a cigar from his pocket and lighted it, and for several minutes puffed away in silence.

Ned watched him closely, and waited for him to speak.

"I had hoped, Ned, that I should never be called upon to tell you," Abram began. "But it seems there's no help for it. I may as well make a clean breast of it first as last. It's terribly humiliating, and likely enough you will despise me;" and he looked at the younger man appealingly. But Ned was silent—he could not reply yet. He knew not what was coming.

"It was a terrible temptation, my boy. God grant that you may never be tempted in the same way! I ought to have put it from me at the first, but I didn't—I didn't. Heaven knows I have been punished for it since."

"But what is it you did, father?" Ned asked, with a troubled light in his eyes and a little shake in his voice.

"Ah! that is the strange part of it," Abram answered. "I did nothing actually. When it came to the actual point

I couldn't do it. For ten years I planned and contrived with a deliberate purpose, but at the last moment my heart failed me."

"Then, you have done nothing after all?"

"But I meant it, all the same, and I reckon God takes account of that. Yes, I meant it! there's no getting over that. The will was there to the very last. But somehow I didn't do it."

"Then, I don't see, whatever it was, that you need worry," Ned answered.

"Ah, my boy! It seems as if you can't plan evil without evil coming out of it. But listen, and I will tell you the whole story."

For the next half-hour Abram talked, and Ned did not speak a word, but his ears tingled as his father recounted the story of his temptation and struggle. Abram did not attempt to palliate his conduct in any way. Whatever might be said of his actual conduct, he knew that in his heart he had sinned; before Heaven he stood guilty, and he felt that Heaven had punished him.

Ned gave a sigh of relief when his father had finished. Then he rose from his chair, and went and kissed him on the forehead.

"You don't despise me, Ned?" Abram asked a little brokenly.

"Despise you, father? May God despise me if I do! You came out of a tight corner as I should never have done."

"Those ten years, my boy, are the dark page in my history. I'm not certain I shall ever get out of their shadow."

"Oh yes, you will. Edie can easily be found. The world is not such a very big place. If wrong gets its punishment, why should not right get its reward?"

"I don't know, Ned, only it seems much easier to get things into a tangle than it does to straighten 'em again."

"Anyhow, our business is clear enough," Ned answered, with beaming face. "After I've shown myself at the cottage, I'll show myself to the squire, and the sight of my face will convince him whose son I am."

"Yes, I don't think he'll doubt when he sees you. But who would have thought it of Dan! He must have played his cards remarkably well."

"But why did not Edie and the squire sift the evidence? I never heard of such a piece of folly."

"You see, Ned, the motive was there, and my whole conduct could favour only one conclusion. Then, Edie is nothing like a Trefusa, and, from what Carve tells me, Dan had a lot of papers duly signed and witnessed. No, I'm not surprised that the squire took it for granted that he was imposed upon. It would be very difficult for him under the circumstances to believe anything else. Dan was cute enough to see that, and so made the best of it."

"Or the worst of it."

"He gained his own ends, anyhow—though how much he got out of the squire will possibly never be known."

"It is a strange story altogether," Ned answered with a look of perplexity on his face; "had it been in a book, one would have said the author's imagination had outstripped his logic."

"Real life can lick romance any day," Abram answered, with a smile. "I could give points to some of those novelists if I had the opportunity."

"Perhaps your story will get into a book some of these days," Ned said jocularly. "But now what about Briar Nock. Are you going to fight the squire?"

"I don't think he'll run the risk of a fight," Abram

answered. "If he does, he'll have to abide by the consequences. He little thinks that his knavery is going to recoil upon him after all these years."

"It's a funny world," Ned said with a smile.

"It's curious how in the long-run right comes to the top," Abram answered gravely. "And more curious still how sins find people out."

"And when do you commence operations?" Ned questioned.

"This evening."

"You don't mean to lose any time, then?"

"No. Carve and I intend going up to the Hall soon after dark."

"Why after dark?"

"Because we can't get there sooner, and we're certain to find him at home then."

"And suppose he shows fight?"

"We shall fight him, that's all. I don't want to show any spirit of revenge. I've had enough of that. Revenge is a sword without a handle, and cuts the hand that holds it. No, no! I don't want revenge, but I want my own. Briar Nook is mine, and shall be yours after me."

"It'll kill the squire to part with it, if what you say of him is true."

"I don't think it'll kill him, he's too tough for that; but it'll be terribly painful."

"I should rather like to be in at the operation."

"You'd be better away," Abram answered with a smile. "Besides, I reckon Carve and I will be more than a match for him."

"The poor old man is evidently in for a lively time," Ned said with a laugh. "His troubles are not coming singly, but in battalions."

"Perhaps it'll do him good to feel God's judgments before

he dies," Abram answered slowly. "But who comes here?" And in response to a knock he went and opened the door.

Outside were the landlord and Trefusa's coachman, Job, the latter with a letter in his hand addressed to Abram Fowey. The landlord's face at that moment was a study. He had been having a wrangle with Job respecting the delivery of his letter.

"I tell you there ain't no Mr. Foy here," David said emphatically.

"But there must be," said Job with equal emphasis. "The squire seed 'n laast night; he was at the Hall."

"I don't know nawthin' 'bout that," David replied; "but there ain't no sich pusson here."

"Ain't there nobody stayin' here?" Job questioned, still unconcerned.

"Ay, there's a Mr. Smith here, an' his son, as have just come from abroad. But that's nawthin' to the point."

"It's everythin' to the point," persisted Job. "Them's the very folks I'm after."

"Git away, you fool!" snarled David. "How can Mr. Smith be Mr. Foy?"

"Why, very well. Smith's all blarney. Why, where's your eyes, David? The man's been foolin' yer. It's Abram Fowey as is stayin' here."

"Abram who?" said David with a wondering stare in his eyes.

"Why, Abram Fowey, to be sure. Ded'n I tell 'ee so at the first?"

"Good lor'!" said David, leaning heavily against the wall and breathing hard. "Es it possible? But no! It caan't be. An' yet 'tes like 'n, now I cum to think 'pon it. Gracious goodness, ef I ever——"

"Let me see un, any'ow," said Job. "Ef 'tain't he, he

waan't take the letter. But ef 'tes he, he'll take it right 'nough, an' then we shall know."

"Ay, that's sensible," said David reflectively. "But let me recover myself a mite. I feel quite queer all over. To think 'pon it, now!"

"There ain't no time to think 'pon it," Job persisted; "the squire is awaitin', an' es as onpatient as a wasp."

"I feel quite flustraceous," said David, stealing on tiptoe to Abram's room door, and knocking feebly.

The next moment Abram's face appeared in the opening. David stared dumbly at him for a moment, then leaned suddenly against the post and muttered:

"Lor' a mercy, 'tes 'im, after all!"

"You be Master Fowey, baan't you?" Job interjected without further ceremony.

"And if I be?" Abram questioned.

"Then, I've got a letter for you from Squire Trefusa. But if you baan't, then I doan't know who you be."

"Give me the letter," said Abram quickly. And he tore open the envelope and glanced at the contents, then passed it on to Ned.

David and Job exchanged significant glances, but did not speak.

Ned read the epistle more slowly than his father had done, then quietly replaced it in the envelope and handed it back to Abram.

"You can wait a few minutes outside," Abram said, turning to Job, and he quietly closed the door in their faces.

The letter was brief and to the point. It read as follows:

"Mr. Trefusa's compliments, and he will be obliged if Mr. Abram Fowey will bring the young man he calls his son to the Hall without further delay."

"You will call on him, of course?" Abram said, as soon as he had closed the door.

"Why, certainly," was the laughing rejoinder. "I don't see why you and Mr. Carve should have all the fun."

Abram at once sat down and wrote the following note :

"My son will call on you in the course of an hour or two. Probably I shall pay my respects later in the day.

"Yours truly,

"ABRAM FOWEY."

"I suppose that will do?" he said, handing it to Ned.

"Yes; it seems to the point," the young man replied with a smile.

"The day has more in store than he knows of," Abram said, sitting down and addressing the envelope. "It is as well, perhaps, he should get the first shock over before the second begins."

In the hall he found Job and David in earnest conversation. They looked a little confused when Abram came suddenly upon them, for they had been indulging in sundry moral reflections on Abram's conduct that were not exactly of a flattering character.

"To think it should be he, and I ded'n' know him!" David said in tones that sounded almost reproachful.

"I wonder he dared shaw 'is face here," Job replied.

"P'raps 'tes his conscience," said David. "People's consciences do make 'em do terrible fullish things sometimes."

"I reckon he seed as how his game was up," Job said reflectively.

"Perhaps the squire have offered a reward for 'n to own up," David suggested. "A man's conscience is terribly helped when there's money in the job."

"I know mine would be," Job said with a laugh. "But the young squire es a terrible fine-looking young fella, ain't he?"

"The very image of his father," David replied.

"The image of who?" Job questioned with wide-open eyes.

"Oh lor'! I'm forgetting," David said, scratching his head. "They baan't father an' son, be 'em? an' yet they're the very spit of each other."

"Sh—h," whispered Job, and Abram came suddenly upon the scene.

"Give this to the squire," he said shortly; and he turned at once and began to retrace his steps to his own room.

"Excuse me, Abram," David called after him, "but this is a terrible surprise."

"We've both altered, David," Abram answered with a smile. "I should never have recognised you, and it's not surprising that you did not recognise me."

"But to think I taalked to 'ee so long laast evenin', an' tell'd 'ee everythin'!"

"You were always fond of a bit of gossip," Abram answered.

"That may be. But I hope I didn't say anything to give 'ee offence like. You see, people have purd'ly talked about 'ee lately, and—well—that is——"

"It's quite right, David. Perhaps their tongues will wag in their own cheek before the week is out. But excuse me now, I'm busy."

"Lor'!" David reflected when the door closed again; "he don't look like a man as is 'fraid, anyhow, an' he do talk like the up-country folk, an' he's dressed up to the nine. 'T'es a terrible queer world, sure 'nough."

Half an hour later, Abram, with a curious sensation at his heart, was making his way across the fields in the

direction of Polmewan. He was more than curious to see Kitty again. Familiar scenes seemed to bring back his youth once more, and he discovered that his affection for his old sweetheart was not altogether dead.

"I wonder if she'll know me?" he mused. "Ah me! if one could only keep young always!"

At the same moment Ned was nearing the cottage in which Mona lived, much wondering what the upshot of his visit would be.

CHAPTER VI.

AT PENDORMIC.

"Like doth quit like, and measure still for measure."

SHAKESPEARE.

MRS. TOM TREFUSA was greatly excited on hearing of Mona's adventure.

"Oh dear!" she exclaimed, nervously clasping and unclasping her hands. "Well, really! What a lucky Providence!"

Luck and Providence meant the same thing to Mrs. Tom.

"And he really lifted you clean out of the saddle and brought you back on his own horse? Why, Mona, it sounds quite romantic! Well, how strange, to be sure! And to think he should be your cousin without his knowing it! You are quite sure he said his name was Fowey?"

"Quite sure, mother."

"Horrid name, isn't it? It is really a shame a Trefusa should have borne it so long. However, 'All's well that ends well,' you know. Won't your grandfather be delighted?"

"That all depends," Mona said, with an absent look in her eyes. "You know he was very fond of Ted. Poor Ted! it's very hard on him. I wish I knew where he was."

"Why, Mona, I am surprised at you. I thought you

had quite forgotten him by this time. Think of it, child—the son of one of your grandfather's tenants ! and who his mother was nobody knows."

"I don't know that that makes any difference," Mona answered quietly. "Ted was a gentleman, and I shall always be fond of him, and I never want to forget him."

"Why child, you talk like a little Radical. I cannot imagine where you get such absurd ideas from. You make me feel hot all over ;" and Mrs. Tom began to fan herself vigorously.

"But, mother dear, what difference can it make?" Mona said pleadingly. "Ted is just Ted, whatever may be his other name. You know he is clever, and anyone more honourable you never knew ; and until the secret of his birth came out you thought the world of him."

"That's nothing to the point," Mrs. Tom answered with warmth. "The fact of his being a Fowey has upset everything. Think of it, child—a Fowey !"

"I can see nothing amiss with the name," Mona answered with a smile. "Indeed, I rather like it."

"Oh, Mona, you are very provoking," Mrs. Tom said with a sigh. "But I cannot be angry with you to-day. I am so thankful you have not got hurt. Think of it, dear—you might have been killed."

"I know it, mother."

"And that he should have saved you, of all people ! It is really like a chapter out of a book. You see, Mona, I was right after all. I told you last night I should not be at all surprised if he were the missing heir of Pendormic."

"I know you did, mother, but you may be mistaken yet."

Mrs. Tom smiled a little superciliously, and wiped her lips with her scented handkerchief.

"You say he promised to call, Mona?" she questioned, after a pause.

"Yes, mother;" and Mona blushed ever so sweetly.

"He would look very handsome on horseback, I am sure."

"Very likely. I did not notice particularly."

"I am really quite curious to have a good look at him. I wish I took more notice of him yesterday."

"If he should happen to be your nephew, you will have plenty of opportunity in the future."

"If, Mona? I wish you would not suggest doubts in that way."

"I can't help it, mother. But suppose we stop the subject now. I think I will go and rest a bit."

Two hours later Ned was announced, and was shown at once into the drawing-room. He felt a little nervous, for he had not been used to society, and had not the remotest idea what was "the correct thing."

Mrs. Tom heard the announcement with a gasp. She had not expected him for another two hours at least, and was not at all prepared for him.

"My dear," she said to Mona, "you must entertain him until I am ready. I will not be any longer than I can help."

Mona seemed quite pleased with the arrangement, and went at once into the drawing-room, though for some reason or other her heart persisted in beating uncomfortably fast.

Ned advanced to meet her when she came into the room, and grasped her outstretched hand in a way that made the blood mount suddenly to her cheeks.

"It is very kind of you to call," she said, in some little confusion. "Mother will be here in a few minutes. She is very anxious to thank you."

"Please don't mention it," he replied. "I hope you are none the worse for your adventure."

"I feel a little shaken, that is all ; I shall be all right again to-morrow."

"I hope so ; but you will not venture on horseback again for a little while."

"That all depends on whether grandfather will let me have another pony."

"You will ask him, of course?"

"Not just yet. He will have to get over the loss of this one first."

Ned laughed. He was beginning to feel quite at his ease already. He possessed in large degree the happy knack of adapting himself to his circumstances. He was always himself—always natural. Moreover, he was so healthily strong, so free from guile and cant, that even Mona's presence was not sufficient to make him nervous. The more he looked at her, however, the more honestly he admired her, and the longer he talked with her, the more desperately in love he felt. He had been charmed with her on the previous day, she looked so sweet and winsome. His morning's adventure had deepened the interest, and ten minutes of her company in that pleasant and airy drawing-room had completed the work. She looked lovely out of doors, but she was infinitely lovelier in the house—at least, that was his impression. Her every movement was grace itself ; her voice was simple music.

Long before Mrs. Tom appeared on the scene Ned had made up his mind to ask Mona to be his wife. Why not ? He could keep her in comfort, and even in luxury. He had never been in love before. He was quite certain he was in love now, and, from his unsophisticated way of looking at things, it seemed clear enough that heaven intended them for each other. Hence, given a fitting opportunity, and a little more time to get used to each other, and he would tell her exactly what he felt and what he meant.

The barriers of caste, and prejudice, and family pride, he knew nothing about. In Australia such matters had not come much under his notice. A man was taken for what he was worth, irrespective of what his ancestors were. He knew, of course, of the bitter feud between his father and the squire—all the more reason why he should marry the old man's grand-daughter; it would help to heal the breach, and restore the balance once more.

Had he been reared in England, he would have known better—at least, he would have reasoned differently. But Ned was to a large extent a child of Nature, and so persisted in looking at things from his own unprejudiced standpoint.

Mrs. Tom came into the room all silks and smiles, and greeted him with much effusion. She praised his courage and daring, and complimented him on his skill in managing a horse. Indeed, she said so many pretty things to him that he blushed and felt uncomfortable.

"She thinks I am a Trefusa," he said to himself. "I wonder if I ought to undeceive her?" He almost made up his mind that he ought to do so, but she gave him no opportunity.

He grew a little embarrassed at last. He wanted to talk about Edie—to explain the mistake he had made—and to indicate the purpose of his own visit to the Hall. But Mrs. Tom so adroitly managed the conversation that, though what was passing in her mind was clear enough to him, he was foiled in every attempt to correct her misapprehensions.

He rose at length to go, but not before Mrs. Tom had extracted from him a promise to call again at the very earliest opportunity.

"My dear," said Mrs. Tom, when the door had closed behind him, "isn't he handsome, and such a perfect gentleman, too! Those Radicals may say what they like,

but blood always tells in the long-run. Why, the other one is not to be spoken of in the same day!"

"He is certainly very good-looking," Mona said quietly. "But, then, so is Ted."

Mrs. Tom gave her head a toss.

"My dear, they are as different as chalk is from cheese."

"That may be," Mona answered. "Indeed, it is not fair to draw comparisons, and no one can say a word against Ted without hurting me."

"Tut, tut! one would think you were in love with him still."

"I am. If he were my brother I could not love him more."

"What nonsense!"

"It is not nonsense at all! I admit our engagement was a mistake. We neither of us cared for the other in that way, but I shall always think of Ted as one of the best men living."

"At any rate, I hope you will like your new cousin equally well."

"I am not certain that he is my cousin yet."

"Child, how stupid you are!"

"Perhaps I am, but I hope, nevertheless, that he isn't a Trefusa."

"You really are most provoking, Mona!"

"Then, let us drop the subject."

"Very good." And Mrs. Tom sailed majestically out of the room.

Meanwhile Ned was hurrying across the park in the direction of the Hall. He could not help admiring the great sweep of undulating country, with its wooded knolls and picturesque farmsteads. Pendormic, after all, was a place of which anyone might be proud. But he was not in the smallest degree envious.

"I am glad Edie will come back to it again," he said to himself. "It was very brave of him to give it up so readily, but very foolish, all the same; but just like him. Perhaps he will value it all the more for having lost it for a few months."

Peter was waiting in a fever of anxiety for his appearance, and as soon as he presented himself, he was shown at once into the library. A minute or two later Peter hobbled in, looking haggard and hollow-eyed, as though he had not slept for the night.

Ned stood with his back to the light, so that Peter could not see his features very clearly.

"You know why I have sent for you, I suppose?" Peter began, his voice shaking painfully.

"I think so; I saw your note this morning."

"And—and—he has told you who you are?"

"You mean my father?"

"I mean Abram Fowey. He has told you about the—the—mistake?"

"Yes; I am very, very sorry. Edie was very foolish to take things for granted; he should have waited."

"Waited? What do you mean?"

"I mean that if he had waited until now, for instance, my father would have cleared up everything; for, of course, he is your grandson."

"Good heavens! Does Fowey stick to that story still?"

"Stick to it! Of course he does."

"And do you believe him?"

"I have never known my father tell a lie," was the quiet answer.

"Great Scott!" and Peter dropped into a chair with a groan. For several seconds there was silence in the room. Then Peter started to his feet again. "Look here," he said: "there is not a bit of use beating about the bush;

Abram Fowey has tried to palm off his own son on me, but I'm not to be hoodwinked. You are my grandson, and I intend to have my own."

Ned smiled. "I know my father was strongly tempted," he answered. "Indeed, he had resolved to do what you say he did, and made all his plans accordingly; but at the last his better nature triumphed; when it came to the actual point, he could not do it. He has told me all the story; he sent you your own grandson, you may rest assured of that."

"And you believe that you are really Abram Fowey's son?"

"I am quite sure of it. I will take my father's word anywhere."

Peter shook his head and looked troubled.

"You will be convinced if you see my face clearly," Ned suggested. "They say I am the image of my father; let me stand there in the light."

In a moment the two men had exchanged places, and Peter, with his spectacles astride his nose, was eagerly scanning Ned's face.

For several seconds he did not speak; then he muttered under his breath: "I've been a d——d fool, and that's the truth—a blind, blithering idiot! God help me!" and he sank into a chair and hid his face in his hands.

"I hope you are convinced now?" Ned said, after an awkward silence.

"Convinced? God Almighty alone knows what I am."

"I presume, at any rate, you don't want me any further."

"For the present, no. But don't leave St. Aubyn; this business must be probed to the bottom."

Ned made his way back by the way he came. He wanted to see Mona again. He felt that she ought to know

the truth without delay. He was going to make love to her if she gave him a ghost of an opportunity; but he had resolved not to make love under false pretences.

She was standing at the garden-gate when he came across the path. She might have been waiting for him, for her face was turned in his direction. He caught her smile, for the sunlight was upon her face, and hurried forward to greet her.

"Love needs no answering," someone has said; "love understands." This seemed to be so in Ned's case. In truth, love has many languages, and soul speaks to soul, though the lips be silent.

"I have seen your grandfather," he said, in his bright, outspoken way; "and I have something now I would like to say to you, if you will let me."

"Thank you," she said, answering smile with smile. "I hope it is something pleasant."

"Fairly so; though it depends on how you take it."

"How oracular!" she said jokingly, for somehow she could not be shy in the company of this big-hearted giant.

"We have not known each other long, have we?" he said playfully.

"I've heard Ted talk about you," she answered; "and so I feel as though I had known you for years."

"You mean Edie?"

"We never called him that. Grandfather always called him Edward—he hated pet names. But I was granted special privileges, so I called him Ted."

"Oh!" he said with a little gasp. "But I have no right to inquire what those special privileges were."

"Of course not; though I don't mind telling you. You will get to hear before you have been here many days. You see, we were almost like brother and sister, and we loved each other as such. At one time we almost fancied something else, but that was a mistake. We shall always

be like brother and sister;" then she stopped suddenly, and blushed, wondering at her candour.

"I am sorry he has gone away," he said gravely. "But we shall get him back again soon."

"Do you know where he is?"

"No; but we shall easily find him. The world is only a little place, you know."

"It seems to me a very big place," she answered.

For a few moments he was silent; then he said: "Would your mother object, do you think, if you walked with me across the park?"

"Oh no! why should she? Besides, she is asleep;" and she opened the gate and walked serenely away by his side. Had she known what he was going to say to her, she might have hesitated.

CHAPTER VII.

HOPE AND DISAPPOINTMENT.

“I hold it cowardice
To rest mistrustful where a noble heart
Hath pawn'd an open hand in sign of love.”

SHAKESPEARE.

FOR two or three hundred yards they walked along the level drive in silence, though neither of them seemed to feel any embarrassment. Edward had so often spoken of his foster-brother, that Mona found it impossible to regard him as a stranger; while he—naturally buoyant and hopeful—anticipated no difficulty in the way of his love-making: and since he had quite made up his mind that he loved Mona, and that he should never love anybody else, he thought it the wisest policy to make a clean breast of it then and there.

Ninety-nine out of every hundred men would have prepared the way beforehand. But Ned was like no other; he had a way of his own. It was a fixed article of his creed, that if a thing had to be done, the sooner the better. The fact that he had met Mona for the first time less than twenty-four hours before was not to be taken into account. Love does not work by the day. He knew that he loved her; he would have to tell her sooner or later, and he might never have a better opportunity.

"I am glad you and Edie were such good friends," he said, by way of opening the conversation.

"We were very good friends at the last," she answered. "At first we were shy with each other, but then we only saw each other during the vacations."

"And you called him Ted, and loved him like a brother?" he questioned, looking down into her eager, upturned face.

And for reply she smiled at him.

"You see, we are both called Edward," he went on.

"Yes, I know," she answered, still smiling.

"Well, I want you to grant me a special favour, and call me Ned, and love me more than a brother."

At first she thought he was joking, and was disposed to laugh at him. But the grave look on his face convinced her that he was in sober earnest.

"I mean it," he said, stopping in front of her and taking her hands in his.

"Please let me go," she said, with a startled look in her eyes.

"Yes, if you wish it," he answered, and dropped her hands. "But you will not run away from me. I fell in love with you yesterday in the train, and when this morning I was able to save you from being dashed to death, I knew that we were meant for each other."

"Oh, please don't!" she pleaded. "We have not known each other a day."

"That makes no difference," he said quietly. "Life is not to be measured by hours, nor love either. But I will give you all the time you want. I'm only a rough colonial, I know. But I could make you happy, I think, and give you all that your heart could desire."

The tears came suddenly into her eyes as he spoke, and she trembled from head to foot.

He took her hands in his again and held them tightly.

"Don't be afraid, little girl," he said tenderly.

"I'm not afraid," she answered, without looking up.

"I am glad of that," he said, with a smile. "For fear implies doubt. Love can never harm its own, and if you believe I love you, you will know you are as safe with me as with your mother."

She looked up into his face wonderingly, as if not quite comprehending his words.

"I fear I am very blunt and precipitate," he said, after a pause. "But you will forgive me, I know. I don't want any answer yet. There is something else I have to tell you first."

She looked at him inquiringly, but did not speak.

"You think my father practised a fraud on the squire," he went on, "and that Edie is Abram Fowey's son, and that I'm the real Trefusa. That is all a mistake. I want you to be convinced of that as soon as possible. I am not going to make love under false pretences, and if I understand you at all, you do not like me the less because I am a Fowey. Is not that so?"

"It is so," she answered. The words slipped out unconsciously, and a hot blush swept like a tidal wave over her neck and face.

"If, when you have had time to think the matter out, you conclude you can love me," he went on, "nothing shall come between us. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she answered timidly.

"Between our families there will be trouble," he said. "In the past wrong has been done. My father has suffered bitterly, and for many years. That must not come between us. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes," she said eagerly. She could not help it. He seemed to move her at his will.

"I would like to have some token of your love now," he

said. "But I can wait—yes, I can wait. You have listened to me, and so cannot be wholly indifferent. I have looked into your eyes, and they smile upon me. I have held your hands, and they do not shrink from my touch——"

"Oh, please do not blame me," she said, with a touch of distress in her voice.

"Blame you?" he interposed quickly. "Blame should be for those who are false to themselves. I have given you no time to reason the matter out, and you have simply followed your heart. Follow it always, and I will come for my answer—when?"

"Oh, I do not know!" she replied in considerable agitation. "What have I said? Oh, you ought not to put such a question to me!"

"Love must dare something," he answered; "and mine will dare anything. Besides, we were meant for each other: I am sure of it."

"But I have given you——" Then she stopped suddenly.

"You have committed yourself to nothing," he answered, after a pause. "You have listened to my confession of love with questioning eyes, that is all—except——"

"Except what?"

"Except that you have not turned from me."

"You are so impetuous," she said. "You do not give me time even to get angry."

"You cannot be angry with a man for telling you honestly that he loves you," he said with a smile. "I know I am blunt, and, as you say, impetuous, but when one's mind is made up, what is the use of waiting?"

"The most serious affairs of life are not to be decided in a moment," she answered.

"But they often are," he replied. "We flatter ourselves that we are taking time when we are doing nothing of the sort. It is a little fiction we indulge in merely for the look

of the thing. But you shall have time. Shall I walk back again with you to the house?"

"Oh no, please! I would prefer to go back alone."

"You will not be able to go for a ride to-morrow?"

"But that will not prevent me from walking."

"Is your favourite walk toward the sea?"

"Yes, though I often go into the village, and sometimes towards Penzugla."

"We shall meet again soon," he said; and, raising her hand to his lips, he hurried quickly away, leaving her standing quite still, half wondering whether she was awake or dreaming.

When he reached the King's Arms, he found his father sitting by the window looking absently down the street. Between his teeth was an unlighted cigar, and in his hand a matchbox, but he seemed unconscious of either.

He had been to Penmewan, and had talked once more to his old sweetheart; and now he was wondering whether he would not have been happier if he had never come to England at all.

During the morning, as he walked across the fields in the April sunshine, he felt as though he had never been away. Nothing had changed. There were the same stone stiles that he clambered over when a boy, the same hieroglyphics in the unhewn rock that he puzzled over forty years ago, the same trees dotted about in the fields, the same everything. He was scarcely conscious at the moment of any change in himself. He felt himself a youth again going to see his sweetheart. He was not prepared for any change in Kitty. He came upon her suddenly just outside the farmyard. He opened the gate for her to pass through, for he had no power of speech. He knew her in a moment, but it was clear she did not know him. She looked at him hard, as though expecting him to speak, for strangers were

not often seen at Penmewan. She hesitated in her walk, and when she had gone a few steps she turned and looked back. He let the gate slam to and followed her. She heard his footsteps, and turned again.

"You do not know me, Kitty?" he said, his voice trembling a good deal.

"No, I do not," she said, stopping suddenly, and looking fixedly at him.

"I knew you in a moment," he said, "though—though——" Then he paused; he felt that what he was about to say might not be quite complimentary.

"I am not aware that I ever met you before," Kitty answered.

"I am Abram Fowey," he said.

"No!" and her eyes grew suddenly dim.

It was a painful moment for both—a moment of awakening from a long and pleasantly romantic dream. For thirty years they had carried in their hearts the image of each other. They had thought of each other as youth and maiden; they met as elderly man and woman. All the romance vanished in the twinkling of an eye. Their long, sweet dream melted into thin air.

Kitty was a beautiful woman still, fair and shapely, and queenly in her bearing. But she was not the Kitty he had left behind him. Between the girl of eighteen and the woman of forty-eight there was a great gulf fixed which he could neither fathom nor span.

Kitty was almost more shocked than he, for in him the change was vastly greater. For thirty years Kitty had dreamed of a ruddy youth, with smooth face and blue, kindly eyes. Here was a man gray and bearded and slightly bald, with weather-beaten cheeks and eyes hidden under shaggy brows.

It was hard to have her idol so suddenly and ruthlessly

shattered, and for a moment she could not bear to look at him. She wished he had never come home. It would have been infinitely pleasanter to have dreamed her dream to the end. She had loved Abram Fowey with all her heart—loved him so truly and tenderly that there had never been room in her affections for another. Now, in a moment, and without warning, what had been the light of her life was quenched in darkness; a sudden gust of wind, and the flame was extinguished.

She knew she had no love for this man. This was not the Abram who won her early affections. This was an utter stranger. Perhaps she would learn in time that, though the outward man changes, the man himself remains the same.

Abram was the first to break the silence that fell between them.

"I know I have greatly changed," he said. "I have suffered much in thirty years."

"But you have not done what people say?" she questioned.

"No, Kitty. Had I done so, I should never have looked upon your face again."

"I knew it all the while," she answered; "though people only laughed at me and compelled me to be silent."

"They will not laugh at you again on that score," he said. "Everybody will soon be convinced of the truth."

"I am glad you have kept your—your—good name," she said, looking at him, but not seeing him. "Though I never doubted you."

"Thank you for your good opinion of me," he answered; "though it is more than I deserve. Some day, perhaps, I will tell you everything—that is, if you will care to listen."

"Have you come home to stay?" she questioned.

"I hardly know. It was my intention to do so when I left Australia, but—well, I cannot tell yet."

"Perhaps you will call round again," she said hesitatingly. "I am going into the village, and father is out on the farm somewhere."

"He is able to get out, then?"

"Oh yes; he has picked up wonderfully since the fine weather came. I thought when mother died I should lose him also."

"I will run across again some time when I am not busy. I should like to see your father again."

"I know he will be glad to see you."

"You are going into the village, you say?"

"Yes."

"May I walk with you? I am staying at the King's Arms."

So they walked away together, and talked about the people who had died, and the weather, and last year's crops, but of love no word was spoken. They knew that their romance was at an end. No power on earth could bring back their vanished youth, or fire their blood with the passion of other years.

Abram could have shed tears when he reached his room, he felt so miserable.

Kitty did cry when she got back home, long and silently. She never realized how cruel Time could be till then—never felt how like a thief he was, stealing away all she most cared for, all she most fondly cherished. It seemed to her now that all her love had been in vain. The spikenard of her affection had been wasted. No one was the better that she had loved and waited and hoped. No one was the richer for her giving. Oh, life! life! that it should demand so much and give so little in return! And as these thoughts

passed through her mind she rocked herself in her chair and cried.

Abram thought to comfort himself with a cigar, but he did not light it. He roused himself, however, when Ned came in, and listened eagerly to the story of his interview with the squire.

CHAPTER VIII.

HUMILIATION.

‘Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot
That it doth singe yourself.’

SHAKESPEARE.

ABOUT an hour after sunset Abram and Mr. Carve presented themselves at the door of Pendormic Hall. They both looked exceedingly grave, and they felt it. The errand on which they had come was an important one. They expected a battle royal, and were preparing themselves for the encounter. Without any delay they were admitted into the library, and Peter was informed of their presence.

“Who did you say?” he asked, starting out of his chair.

“Mr. Carve, sir, and the gentleman as called last night.”

“Abram Fowey and Carve,” he muttered under his breath.

“By Heaven! they are beginning in time.” Then aloud:

“All right, I’ll be down in a few minutes;” and the door closed behind the servant.

For a minute or two he paced excitedly up and down the room; then he paused suddenly and stared into the fire.

“I wonder what is in the wind,” he muttered. “I declare I’ve no rest night nor day. I’m worse than a toad under a harrow. It surely can’t be about that boy they’ve come. I’ve made a most confounded fool of myself over that affair. Carve had more wit, after all, than I gave him credit for.”

Then he turned slowly toward the door, opened it quietly, and hobbled downstairs.

Outside the library door he hesitated for a moment, then, setting his thin lips tightly together, he turned the handle and entered.

Carve and Abram rose at once.

Peter inclined his head slightly, then hobbled to a chair by the table and sat down.

"I presume you have come about the young man I saw this morning," he began hurriedly. "I should like some further talk with you, Fowey, on that matter, when you have time, but not in the presence of a third party."

"We have not come to discuss that question at all," Abram said slowly. "That is a matter that may be left to take care of itself. It is an old reckoning I have come to see you about to-night."

"Indeed!" Peter answered shortly.

"Mr. Carve here, who has taken service for me, will explain the object of our visit in very few words."

"I do not wish to have any conversation with Mr. Carve," Peter said with a curl of his thin lip.

"But Mr. Carve wishes to have a conversation with you," Abram answered significantly; "and, what is more, you've got to listen."

"Indeed! You've got on a very high horse to-night; suppose I refuse to hear you further?"

"Then you will have to hear us in some place less private," Mr. Carve interposed. "The truth is, we have come to see if we cannot settle certain matters privately with you. If that is impossible, we shall take them at once into a court of law."

"May I ask, sir, what matters you refer to?"

"Certainly. As executor of my late partner's will, I have come recently in possession of certain letters and

documents relative to the acquirement by you of an estate known as Briar Nook. This estate, as you can scarcely have forgotten, was once in the possession of my clients father, the late John Fowey. You, however, disputed the legality of his title."

"I did, sir—and rightly so."

"You felt safe in doing so, no doubt?"

"I did," Peter snapped.

"That is an important admission," Mr. Carve said quietly. "You understood, probably, by what means the late John Fowey was induced to part with his deeds, and how it came about that practically worthless documents were palmed off upon him."

"Sir! have you come here to insult me?" Peter roared, with blazing eyes.

"I have come to put the truth before you," Mr. Carve observed with quiet dignity. "Unfortunately for you and for his own good name, my late partner had a most unaccountable antipathy against destroying papers of any kind."

"Did he never destroy papers?" Peter asked, his lips working nervously.

"I won't say never, but it was very rarely he did so. For instance, your letters to him *re* that most—most—well, unfortunate transaction, to put it mildly, are now in my possession. John Fowey's deeds, by which his claim to Briar Nook is indisputable, I have handed over to his son. The letters of Blewitt (who was then steward of Sir Harry Probus) to my late partner, as well as copies of Mr. Whittle's letters to him, I have also in safe custody. Indeed, every detail of the whole—whole—pitiful business is now in my possession. You are caught in your own trap, and there is no possible escape for you."

During the delivery of this speech Peter's face had grown

paler and more haggard. Abram, who sat watching him narrowly, felt almost sorry for him, he looked so utterly cowed and miserable. He tried his best to pluck up courage and answer back with a poor attempt at defiance.

"This is all humbug, Carve. I'm not such a fool as to be frightened by a lawyer."

Mr. Carve at once took a letter from his pocket and read it aloud, and then held it to the light, so that Peter could see the writing and the signature.

"You will not deny, I presume, that you wrote that letter," he said quietly.

For a moment Peter shrank back into his chair as if utterly defeated. Then, rising suddenly to his feet, he almost shrieked :

"Deny? Yes; I'll deny anything. It's all a huge swindle, an infernal plant, a—a—a——" but he did not finish the sentence. He could not find an adjective sufficiently expressive.

Mr. Carve waited a few moments in silence; then he rose slowly from his chair and began to button his coat.

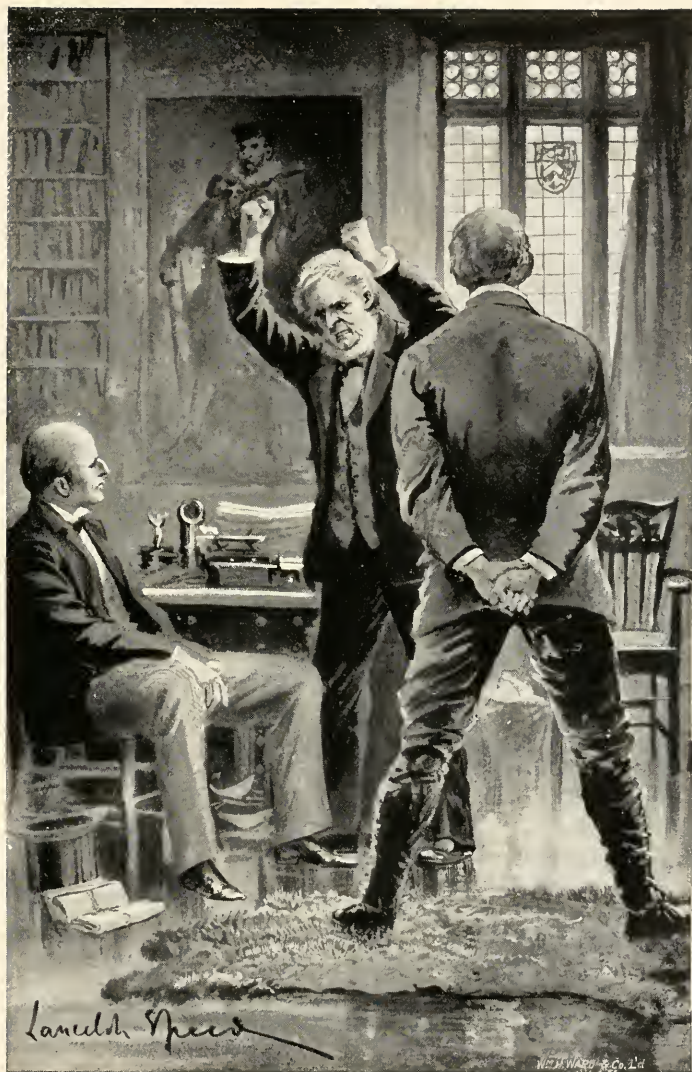
"Of course, if you are determined to fight the matter out in a court of law," he remarked mildly, "nothing more need be said."

"By Heaven! and I will fight the matter out, too," he shouted, "though it cost me every penny I possess."

"That will be good news for the lawyers," Mr. Carve remarked cynically. "But, I can assure you, you will lose more than money in the transaction. Some of your letters to Mr. Whittle will make spicy reading for the public."

"And the public will soon forget 'em," he said defiantly. "Besides, in law, he who can hold out wins."

"If you think you can crush my client with a long purse," Mr. Carve interposed, "you are reckoning without



"Deny? Yes; I'll deny anything."

your host. I wish you to understand that Mr. Fowey is a rich man—a very rich man.”

“Then, why the devil does he bother me?”

“I want my own,” said Abram doggedly; “and, what is more, I’ll get it. I’ve come here in no spirit of revenge. I’m willing to save you from the scorn of all honest men. But forego my own any longer I won’t.”

“You think you will get back Briar Nook, do you?” Peter questioned with a sneer.

“I’ve got it back already,” Abram answered. “I’m in possession of all the deeds. Oh no; Briar Nook is not all I want. For thirty years you have been receiving the rent of it—my rent, do you understand. Eighty pounds a year for thirty years at compound interest. You can easily make up how much it comes to. You’ve got to give me that—every penny of it.”

“I’ll be d——d first!” Peter almost screamed.

“You’ll be that in any case,” Abram answered with scorn.

“Great Scot!” shouted Peter, drawing himself up to his full height. “What do you take me for?”

“You’d better not press that question,” Abram said.

“Not press it?”

“No; you’d find no comfort in knowing what people took you for.”

Peter stared aghast at his opponent, and Mr. Carve, seeing his opportunity, interposed with the remark:

“No good can come of bandying words, gentlemen. Deeds are more fitting at the present time.”

Peter strode across to the door at once and opened it, and the two men, without a good-night, passed out into the hall. Peter waited with his hand on the door-knob till the servant came and let them out; then he began to stride restlessly up and down the room.

“I’m in a devil of a pickle,” he muttered under his

breath. "Talk about 'curses, like chickens, coming home to roost'—other things come home to roost besides curses. Think of Whittle being such an ass! Well, I'm in for it; but one thing is clear—Edward is not Fowey's son, or he wouldn't want to steal Briar Nook from him. And if the other isn't his son, Nature is the foulest liar going, for they are as like as two peas."

After this deliverance Peter stole away to his den, where he sat crouched in his easy-chair till far into the night.

Next morning, while Mr. Carve was at breakfast, he was greatly surprised to hear Mr. Trefusa announced.

"Mr. Peter Trefusa?" he questioned of the servant.

"Yes, sir; the old gent."

"Show him into my private room, and say I will be with him in a minute."

"Now, Mr. Carve," said Peter, when the lawyer appeared on the scene, "I want to go into this business thoroughly. I've served you badly, I'll admit, but that's no reason why we shouldn't sift this matter from top to bottom."

"I am quite willing," said Mr. Carve quietly; "but, understand, I am acting for Mr. Abram Fowey."

"That won't hinder us getting at the truth; and first about the boy. You've been with Fowey—is there any fresh evidence, and is everything straightforward? Then, secondly, about Briar Nook; let's have no gammon—I want to know exactly how matters stand."

"Had I not better treat with you through your solicitor?" Mr. Carve asked quietly.

Peter gave expression to an expletive which we will not repeat.

"No," he said; "no more solicitors for me, if I can help it. Drop your profession for a moment, and let's talk the matter out like two ordinary men."

"Very good, Mr. Trefusa. Draw your chair up on the

opposite side of the table. Now, let me know first of all what it is you particularly wish to know?"

To repeat the conversation here would be to weary the reader. It was nearly noon when Peter left the lawyer's office, and very soon after Mr. Carve was closeted with Abram in his room at the King's Arms, Ned in the meanwhile being much more agreeably employed in assisting Mona down the cliff-path to the beach.

Of course, Ned did not know that Mona would go for a walk that morning, or even, if she did walk out, that she would turn her face in that direction. There are some things young people find out by instinct, and this seemed to be one of them. They had not arranged to meet—Mona would have been shocked at the bare suggestion—but they knew they would meet, all the same. Of course Mona made a little pretence of surprise; that was only natural and maidenly, and Ned admired her all the more for it.

He affected no surprise at all. He told her candidly that he had come out on purpose to meet her, and that he would have been awfully disappointed if she had gone for her morning's walk in any other direction.

She, being native to the place, showed him the caves, and the place where she nearly got drowned—and would have drowned, but for Dorothy; led him out to the end of the reef, and explained a good many things that required no explaining. Only it was music to Ned to hear her talk, and he encouraged her in every possible way.

It was a most delightful morning to Ned. He did not talk love to her, but he held her hand a good deal. It was necessary sometimes, for the rocks were slippery. Then she had such dainty boots, and the prettiest little feet he had ever seen; and in one or two places the pools were wide, and he was too chivalrous to let her spoil her boots, and perhaps get her feet wet, by wading through the water.

Of course they might go round, but that would be very prosaic in comparison with the way they did cross. And so, in spite of pools and rocks and slippery places, they got on delightfully together—perhaps in consequence of them. It is not always easy to say what it is that makes time fly so pleasantly. Noon came to these young people when they could have sworn they had not been half an hour together; and they had to hurry back much more quickly than was pleasant. They did not say anything about meeting that afternoon; and in reality it was only by the merest accident they did meet—a very pleasant accident it was, no doubt, for they discovered they were both going in the same direction, and they had so many things to talk about that were interesting to both.

Ned got an impression that the hours were shorter in England than in Australia, or else that time travelled much more swiftly. Such brief mornings and afternoons he had never known before. Mona assured him that when it rained, and there was no getting out of doors, the days were frightfully long.

“Ted used to complain awfully sometimes,” she said.

“And were you with him?”

“Sometimes.”

“And did he complain then?”

“Why, of course, or I shouldn’t have heard him.”

“I don’t understand Edie,” he said reflectively. “I should never complain of the days being long if you were with me.”

“Oh! you don’t know me,” she said, with a most bewitching smile, which led him to say a great many other things, which need not be recorded.

After that day the truth began to leak out—not all the truth, by any means. But it got known in the village that

certain long-lost deeds had been discovered which established Abram Fowey's claim to Briar Nook; that the question of Trefusa's heir was now placed beyond all doubt, and that every effort was being made to discover his whereabouts; that both Mrs. Tom and Peter were intensely anxious that Edward's engagement with Mona should be renewed, and wanted him back speedily for that purpose; that Mrs. Tom made a sudden discovery that Ned Fowey was utterly without style or breeding; that when he called at the cottage a second time she declined to see him, and that she had given strict injunctions to Mona that she was not to speak to him on any consideration.

But there was a great deal the gossips never discovered. Peter was not the man to wear his heart upon his sleeve; he had sense enough to see that his game was up; that his dishonesty and intrigues had recoiled upon his own head; that his shame would be exposed to the world if he let the matter go into a court of law. And so he capitulated at discretion, but what it cost him no one ever knew. He felt the bitter failure of his life, and cursed Whittle and Blewitt and Abram Fowey, and himself most of all.

It was humiliating, no doubt, to see what he had sold his very soul for slip so easily from his grasp. There were times when he tramped up and down his den like a caged bear, and foamed at the mouth with rage. His utter impotence maddened him; the very thought of Abram's triumph was as the bitterness of death. If he hated the name of Fowey before, he loathed it now, and loathed it all the more because he knew that Abram at any time could, if he desired, expose his humiliation to the world.

Abram's magnanimity was but another thorn in his flesh; and a report that reached his ears, that Mona had been seen walking out with his son Ned, was like a spark to

gunpowder. He was being foiled at every point, defeated on every side, made the laughing-stock of fools, and a target for every enemy to shoot at.

And yet the cup of his humiliation was not full, nor the triumph of his enemies complete.

CHAPTER IX.

A DISCOVERY.

“Love will find its way
Through paths where wolves would fear to prey.”
BYRON.

It wanted but a few days of the time fixed for the wedding. Edward was seated in Mr. Walden's library waiting for his employer. On the writing-table was lying an unopened copy of the *Times*. For want of something else to do, he picked it up, and ran his eye down the agony column. Suddenly he started from his chair and went to the window, as if not sure that he had read aright. The paragraph, however, was straightforward enough, and clearly printed.

“Will Edward Trefusa, who left home in October last, return to Pendormic at once?”

“I wonder what is the meaning of this,” he said to himself at length, staring out of the window, but seeing nothing. “Something has happened, surely; some—some—— But it's no use speculating; I'll wire at once;” and he rushed into the hall, and took his hat from the rack. “Tell Mr. Walden,” he said to the maid, who was busy dusting the furniture, “that I have gone across to the telegraph-office, and will be back again in a few minutes.”

“I'll wire to Carve as well,” he reflected, as he hurried

along the street. "If—if—— But there, what's the use of wondering? I shall know in an hour or two."

How he got through his work that morning he never knew. But it came to an end at length, and as he was leaving for dinner, two telegrams were handed to him.

He waited till he got into the street before he opened them. The first was from Peter :

"Everything is cleared up," it said ; "you are my grandson. Sending money to-night ; come directly you get it."

Mr. Carve's telegram was of greater length :

"Abram Fowey has arrived at St. Aubyn, also his son. Proofs of identity beyond dispute. Trefusa perfectly satisfied. Very anxious for your return. The Foweyes eagerly looking for you. My hearty congratulations."

Edward gave a prolonged whistle when he reached the end, and turned his steps into a neighbouring square.

"Well, this is a case of how d'ye do !" he said reflectively. "So I'm the squire, after all ! I wonder if I am glad ? I think I am, for Dorothy's sake. I shall be able to dress her like a queen ; and won't she be able to brighten the old Hall ! And yet I must keep it dark till after the wedding. She'll not marry me if she gets to know. She'll insist on getting the squire's consent, and half a dozen other things ; and if I wait for his consent, I may wait till I'm gray."

Then he paused suddenly. A new difficulty had suggested itself to him. In giving notice of marriage, he had given his name as Edward Fowey.

"It looks as if I'm destined to be balked," he said to himself, with knitted brows. "I can't be married under a wrong name, and there's no time to rectify it now. There must be three clear weeks. Oh dear ! I'd rather lose Pendormic fifty times over than lose Dorothy."

In his distress he rushed off to the minister who had promised to perform the ceremony, and he, sympathetic man, suggested a special license.

This was procured next morning out of Peter's remittance, which arrived by the first post, and the marriage was settled to take place at the time originally appointed.

Edward had considerable difficulty in keeping the secret from Dorothy. At any other time his excitement would have made her suspicious that something more than ordinary had happened. As it was, she concluded that the approaching wedding was sufficient explanation of his high spirits and unfailing humour.

They spent all their evenings together, and arranged a little honeymoon trip to Salisbury, and made plans for the laying out of their spare cash, and built no end of castles in the air.

Dorothy made a calculation of how much they would be able to save out of their joint incomes, and how long it would take them to furnish a little house of their own.

Edward's conscience pricked him terribly at times. He felt that it was scarcely fair to her to keep her in ignorance of a fact so important. And yet he enjoyed the secret immensely, and encouraged her in the pleasant work of castle-building.

Dorothy was supremely happy. She had no misgivings respecting the future. Edward was her ideal. She loved him with all her heart, and was quite content to commit to him the keeping of her life. They were poor, it was true, and possibly would remain poor to the end of the chapter. But they were not worse off than millions of others. The happiness of life did not consist in money, and home was more than furniture.

Neither of them was afraid of work. Indeed, both were all the happier for having plenty to do, and since in

those days work meant money, they did not spend much time in idleness. Dorothy made her own wedding outfit, and made it well, for in a double sense it was a labour of love. Sometimes Edward, when he had nothing better to do, turned the handle of the sewing-machine which Dorothy had borrowed of her landlady, and appeared greatly to enjoy the performance.

Dorothy never alluded to Pendormic. She had no wish to awaken old memories in the heart of her lover. She wondered sometimes if he ever regretted the change in his fortune. For herself, she rejoiced; the loss of his fortune meant the gain of hers; yet, strangely enough, she never thought of him as Edward Fowey, and so on the morning of the wedding, when he was addressed by the minister as Edward *Trefusa*, she did not betray any surprise. Indeed, she did not notice it. The name fell quite familiarly on her ears. She had never known him by any other name.

When, however, she came to sign the register, the thought instantly occurred to her, and she glanced at him with a questioning, almost startled, look in her eyes.

"It's all right, Dorothy," he said, with a smile; and with that assurance she seemed quite content.

But directly they got into the cab that was waiting outside the church to take them to the railway-station, she turned to him eagerly, and said:

"Edward dear, do you know you signed your name Trefusa?"

"Yes, Dorothy; it is quite right."

"You have adopted the name, then, in lieu of your own?"

"No, my darling; it is my own name."

"But I do not understand. If you are not Mr. Trefusa's grandson, but the son of——"

"Oh, Dorothy!" he exclaimed, stealing his arm round her waist; "that's my little secret. I did not know till a

few days ago, and I thought I would not tell you till I had got you safe."

"What do you mean, Edward?" she said, growing pale and trembling a good deal. "You surely are not Edward Trefusa after all?"

"Yes, I am," he said, kissing her tenderly. "But don't blame me, darling; it really is no fault of mine."

"But you might have told me, Edward," she said, with tears in her beautiful eyes.

"So I might, but I was afraid you would throw me up if you knew. I know how proud you are, and so I resolved to make sure of you first."

"Oh, you naughty boy!" and then she kissed him, and the next moment the cab drew up at the station.

There was a good deal of consternation on the following morning at Pendormic, when news was received that Edward had got married on the day previous to Dorothy Grey.

Peter fell back into his chair, and looked as if he would have a fit. It really seemed as if everything and everybody were bent on defying him and tormenting him. Every scheme of his was going wrong, every design and purpose was being frustrated. Nothing was working out according to his calculations. Every plan had miscarried.

At one time he would have sworn and raved, and vowed that neither Edward nor his wife should ever darken his door. But he had no energy left. All the "fight" had been crushed out of him. He was too absolutely defeated, too utterly humiliated, to offer any further resistance.

"My power is at an end," he groaned. "I've got to take things as they come."

Mrs. Tom, when she heard the news, went into hysterics. But Mona laughed and danced as though a fortune had been left her, and soon after stole out of the house, and

down into the Penzugla Road, where she met Ned—purely by accident—and told him all the news.

Ned carried the news into St. Aubyn, where it spread like wildfire, and by noon had reached the quiet precincts of Green Bank.

Miss Jane at first refused to give credence to the story—declared that it was a bit of malicious gossip that was not worth listening to. An hour later she assumed a most dignified bearing and tone, and said that if a relation of hers chose to make a fool of herself, and the talk of the parish, that was her look-out, and that she (Miss Jane) should not trouble in the least about it.

By three o'clock Miss Jane had grown quite reconciled, and hinted that by birth and education her niece was equal to any position.

Over afternoon tea she grew quite eloquent in praise of Dorothy and her husband, and assured her visitors that no two young people could be more devoted to each other.

By the evening she spoke of her niece, "Mrs. Edward Trefusa, of Pendormic," and was in danger of patronizing people who could not boast of equally aristocratic relations.

When at length Edward and Dorothy arrived on the scene, there was general rejoicing and jubilation. A whole crowd of people met them at the station, including Abram and Ned. The meeting between Edward and Ned, people said, was most affecting, while Abram struggled manfully to keep the tears out of his eyes, and failed utterly in the end.

Edward insisted on Abram and Ned driving with him and Dorothy through St. Aubyn.

"I knew you before I knew my grandfather," he said, in reply to Abram's protest, "so you've got to submit."

Ned raised no objection at all. It was like old times to be with Edie again. Of course he had grown—they both had; but Edie was Edie still, the best brother and comrade

that any fellow ever had. How they chatted during that drive into St. Aubyn, and what old memories they revived ! It was an experience worth living for. Edward left his wife to be entertained by Abram, and on the whole he managed remarkably well.

At Green Bank there was a halt, and a little scream of delight, and a rustle of silks, and a flutter of lace, and a most careful touching of curls.

Dorothy submitted to Miss Jane's caresses quietly, and without emotion. She could not forget how ungenerously she had been sent adrift six or seven months before.

At the King's Arms the crowd blocked the street, and it was noticed that Ezra Drake shouted as loudly and waved his cap as frantically as anyone.

When they reached the cottage, Mona rushed out with brimming eyes and happy face, and almost smothered Dorothy with kisses.

"I am so thankful to you for marrying him," she said laughingly. "I was afraid at one time I should have to marry him myself;" and then she kissed Edward, and called him the best cousin in the world.

Peter was waiting at the Hall in a fever of anxiety and apprehension. He had never seen Dorothy, and had made up his mind that he would never like her.

But one glance at her face reconciled him.

"By Heaven !" he muttered under his breath, "she licks Mona into fits. The boy knows what's what, after all."

CHAPTER X.

TIME WILL TELL.

‘ Yes, there are things we must dream and dare,
And execute ere thought be half aware.’

BYRON.

ABRAM FOWEY had got back his own with compound interest, and yet he was not happy ; and had Ned been willing, he would have returned again to Australia. He hardly knew in what his disappointment lay. People were very kind to him, and as deferential as he could desire. But somehow St. Aubyn was not just what he had dreamed it would be. He had looked at it through the golden mists of memory, had surrounded it with a halo of romance, had idolized it for thirty long and lonely years, and now he discovered that the reality was not all that he had pictured it. He did not know that all the change was in himself, that the passions and emotions of youth are impossible to the man of middle age. If he could have bridged the gulf of years that lay between, and wrung from the cruel hand of Time his early manhood, he would have felt differently. But not Omnipotence, alas ! can restore what is over and past.

A ship cleaving the ocean and leaving no track ; a stream flowing to the sea and never halting on its way ; a shadow passing on the dial and never turning back—such is life.

He felt its mockery, its pathos, its pain, and for a time he had no sense of anything else. He had expected that the possession of a few acres of land would be as heaven to him, and had learned, with a sudden sense of pain and disappointment, "that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

It was, perhaps, a necessary lesson for him to learn, and, like most lessons that are good, had to be learned through pain and travail.

Ned was quite unable to enter into his father's feelings. He found St. Aubyn all that Abram had described it to be, and more. The country was lovely, the cliffs magnificent, the sea a never-failing source of delight; while the people were so primitive, so simple-hearted, so kind, that he was never tired of talking to them, or of listening to their folk-lore, which they retailed with unfailing gusto and delight.

Also, since Edward had returned to Pendormic, a new bond existed. The young men went out nearly every day. Sometimes they took rambles together, sometimes rides, and sometimes they simply roamed in the sunshine or in the shadow of the trees.

Dorothy fell into the ways of Pendormic with wonderful ease and grace, or, more correctly perhaps, she remodelled things after her own pattern. Peter quite fell in love with her; she was so gracious, so vivacious, so full of life and humour, so uniformly kind, that she touched into life every remnant of good that remained alive in the old man's heart.

Pendormic seemed another place. Her skill, her taste, her gift of management, manifested themselves everywhere. Moreover, she so completely captured the old man's heart, that she had only to suggest a new carpet or a new piece of furniture and it was forthcoming at once.

The people of St. Aubyn almost worshipped her, and Miss Jane, as a consequence, felt that her importance had increased by several degrees. She was never tired of speaking of her niece "Mrs. Edward Trefusa of Pendormic."

Dorothy often ran in to see her aunt, and on state occasions Miss Jane always found her way to the Hall. Those were proud moments in her uneventful life, though she could never wholly forget the fact that once upon a time she treated her niece badly. As time passed on, Dorothy's father came to see her occasionally. But her stepmother she steadily refused to see. "We shall be happier apart," she would say. But it was, nevertheless, a bitter humiliation to Mrs. Grey.

Ned's love affairs ripened rapidly, though it has to be confessed they were carried on in secret. It should be stated, however, that Mrs. Tom's strong antipathy to the name of Fowey underwent considerable modifications when she learned that he was the possessor of a considerable fortune. Still, his name was not mentioned in the cottage for many months, and if Mrs. Tom knew that he and Mona were frequently seen together, she judiciously put her blind eye to the telescope and remained silent.

Edward and Dorothy soon discovered how events were tending, and gave the young people all the encouragement they needed, though, truth to tell, they did not need much.

Ned was never quite certain how or when he got the secret out of Mona, but love has many ways of revealing itself, and one day she said to him quite artlessly :

"Ted always told me that if I got to know you I should care no more for him."

"But do you care for him?"

"Oh yes, I like him very much, but—oh! do look at that squirrel."

"Never mind the squirrel," he said eagerly; "what else were you going to say?"

"I was going to say what I did say," she answered, with a merry light in her eyes.

"I shall keep you here until you do tell me," he said with pretended severity.

"How hungry you will get!" she answered in the same severe tones.

"I'm hungry now," he answered — "hungry for your love."

"Some people won't see things when they are set before them," she replied.

And then—well, he caught her in his arms and kissed her.

The day following he went to see Mrs. Tom, and in his usual frank and easy fashion told her just how matters stood, and asked her consent to their marriage.

Mrs. Tom at once burst into tears, and said she could not possibly part with Mona, that she was lonely enough now, and that if Mona were to leave her she would die.

Ned, however, was quite equal to the occasion. He said that he would build a new wing to the cottage, and they could all live under the same roof.

Mrs. Tom said she would speak to the squire about it, and there the matter ended for a time.

Peter's face was a study when it was mentioned to him. A Trefusa marry a Fowey! It was too absurd. And for half an hour he laughed and swore alternately.

But he discovered, as the days passed on, that even this bitter cup he would have to drink also. His day of authority was gone. The young life springing up around him was pressing the old life to the wall. He felt acutely the bitter irony of the situation, but he had no power of resistance left.

As the summer advanced, he saw the new wing of the building growing into shape, and was heard to declare that when finished it would almost equal the Hall itself. He heard, too, of a new wing being added to the house at Briar Nook, but he never went to look at it, and never asked who was going to live there when it was finished.

Abram grew more cheerful as the months passed on, and got into the habit of running over to Penmewan nearly every evening to have a smoke with old John Treleven. He discovered, too, that the more he saw of Kitty the more she seemed like her old self. Familiar tones and gestures came back to him that reminded him irresistibly of the happy days of long ago.

What the future will bring forth is not for us to say, but there are rumours to the effect that Edward is busy writing a book ; that Ned is devoting his spare time to the study of politics, with a view to becoming a candidate at the next Parliamentary election. It is assumed that he will be married by then, and that his young wife will be of immense advantage to him in his canvass.

It is generally prophesied also that Abram will spend the evening of his days at Briar Nook, and that Kitty will keep him company, and certainly all present indications point in that direction.

Walter Smith found another Dorothy before the year was out—a woman of very different type from the Dorothy we know ; but as he seems quite satisfied with his choice, nothing more need be said.

There is a rumour current in St. Aubyn that Mr. Carve, who is a widower, has grown to be very friendly with Miss Jane Pendray, and that, judging by the frequency of his visits to Green Bank, the lady in question must have a good deal of legal business to transact.

Of course, there are people who say that the lawyer does

not talk law all the time he is with Miss Jane, which may be true, or it may not be. We give the rumour for what it is worth. Miss Jane has only herself to please, and if she chooses to follow in the steps of younger people no one has any right to complain.

THE END.

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